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Food Control in the North-West Division

By

H. W. CLEMESHA, M.A.

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Court, sometime Deputy Commissioner for Food*

WITH A FOREWORD BY

THE RIGHT HON. J. R. CLYNES, M.P.

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I AM deeply indebted to Mr. Clynes, whose eminent services to this country as Food Controller will not readily be forgotten by anyone who was a member of the staff of the Ministry of Food, for having introduced to the public this short account of the work and organization of the Ministry in the counties of Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumberland, and Westmorland.

I have also to thank Mr. G. R. Belshaw, Mr. L. Cotman, Mr. A. E. Magee, and Miss Mary Pilkington for help given in writing it.

H. W. CLEMESHA

*County Court Offices,
Preston,*

January 31, 1922

FOREWORD

THESE chapters deal with aspects of food administration in war time not set forth in any detail elsewhere. They show that administration was more than a matter of machinery. Administration to be successful in relation to food questions depended very much upon the use of the right human touch and upon those factors which, in a great if temporary job, called specially for rare personal qualities and fitness to deal with new tasks every day.

Although the book is written in relation to the North-West Division, the account it gives applies as well to other Divisions from which similar records have not been furnished. The book will be extremely useful as a historical record, and for students who will be interested in looking back upon one of the greatest adventures in public work occasioned by the war. The Author clearly explains the system of rationing and distribution, and outlines the steps which had to be taken for dealing in bulk and in detail with the particular foods purchased and controlled by a temporary Ministry, which grew during every day of its existence, because always there were new undertakings to be faced as the war continued.

A department like the Ministry of Food was largely dependent for any success upon the uniform patience and gifts of its numerous servants, and not least upon

the special organizing power of the men who served in the Divisional offices. They, in turn, were largely dependent upon the energy and efficiency of Local Food Control Committees, and I can endorse heartily the good word to be found in some of these pages in praise of the services which these bodies and their Executive Officers rendered to their country in connection with the war.

J. R. CLYNES

FOOD CONTROL IN THE NORTH-WEST DIVISION

CHAPTER I

THOUGH certain orders had been issued for the control of food when Lord Devonport was Food Controller, it was not until the days of his successor, Lord Rhondda, that it was decided to introduce rationing and to form local committees throughout the United Kingdom to administer and enforce the regulations of the Ministry of Food. After this decision had been arrived at, an Order was issued in the month of August, 1917, empowering every local authority to appoint a committee, known as the Local Food Control Committee, on certain lines which will be set out later.

Divisions

These Committees were grouped together in Divisions, to each of which a Commissioner was appointed. In Scotland there were three such Divisions, North and South Wales formed two more, while there were eleven of them in England. Their boundaries followed generally those of the counties which they contained, and the Commissioner's office was fixed in some centrally situated large town or city. The English Divisions, the counties they included and their "capitals" were as follows :

DIVISION	COUNTIES	CAPITAL
North	Northumberland and Durham	Newcastle
North-West	Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumberland and Westmorland	Preston
North-East	Yorkshire	Leeds
Midlands	Stafford, Shropshire, Worcester, Warwick and Hereford	Birmingham

DIVISION	COUNTIES	CAPITAL
North Midlands	Nottingham, Derby, Lincoln, Leicester, Rutland and Northampton	Nottingham
South Midlands	Oxford, Buckingham, Berkshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire	Reading
East	Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Bedford	Cambridge
London	London	London
Home Counties (North)	Hertford, Essex and Middlesex	London
Home Counties (South)	Surrey, Kent and Sussex	London
South-West	Gloucester, Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall	Bristol

The Divisional Commissioner

The Divisional Commissioner acted as a sort of intermediary between the Ministry and the Local Food Control Committees, and the latter were invited to address their communications, their questions, their criticisms and their complaints to him, and not to the Ministry or any department of it in London. In his turn he acted as adviser to the Committees and their officials, the Executive Officers, exercising a sort of parental care over them, and being held more or less responsible for their good conduct and the efficient performance of the duties that had been placed upon them.

Though conferences of Divisional Commissioners were held every month in London, at which their advice was sought, or they were informed in advance of the Ministry's projects, they were in no way responsible for its policy and exercised merely executive

powers, higher in degree, no doubt, but not differing in kind from those entrusted to Food Control Committees. Their position and their powers were never, so far as I remember, strictly defined, but practically every matter that Food Control Committees felt themselves unable to deal with was referred to them for their advice or decision, or for submission to the higher powers.

The instructions that were issued to Food Control Committees and to traders, and were known respectively as M.G.'s (Memoranda of Guidance) and L.G.'s (Leaflets of Guidance), were probably as clear as they could be made, but in many instances they were not free from doubt, while cases repeatedly occurred—it was surprising that they did not occur more frequently—upon which they were silent, or for which no provision was made. In such circumstances the Committees communicated with the Divisional Commissioner, who would either give a ruling on the point, or, if necessary, refer it to the Ministry. In this way the Ministry was relieved of a lot of work and correspondence, which would have led to congestion, while the decentralisation thus effected tended to the quicker despatch of business.

If a shortage of any foodstuff occurred anywhere in the Division it was reported to the Commissioner, who, having inquired into the cause and extent of it, took steps to remedy it, or, if that was impossible, advised the appropriate supply department of the Ministry. For instance, in the early months of 1918 various members of the staff at Divisional Headquarters were occupied in arranging for the transfer of supplies of margarine from the few places in which there were surpluses to the numerous districts in which there were shortages.

If a body of traders took objection to the Ministry's

regulations, or to a Committee's method of putting them into operation, and threatened to refuse to carry them out, the case was laid before the Commissioner, and he or one of his assistants was generally successful in bringing about a reasonable and a peaceable settlement. This success was probably due as much to the local knowledge which he possessed as to anything else, enabling him, as it did, to deal with the problem submitted to him more tactfully and more efficiently than departmental officials in London could ever have hoped to do, however able or conscientious they might have been.

Not infrequently certain organizations which were not represented on a Local Food Control Committee claimed that they were entitled to be so, and brought their grievance to the notice of the Commissioner, who inquired into it and either supported or rejected their claim. Now and again, also, disputes arose between a Food Control Committee and their Executive Officer, and both sides hastened to lay their case before him.

When distribution schemes were initiated in various localities before the introduction of national rationing they were submitted to the Commissioner for his consideration, while he frequently convened conferences of representatives of neighbouring Committees with a view to the adoption by them of a uniform scheme, just as, later, he summoned similar meetings with the object of inducing Committees of adjoining districts to fix the same retail price for milk.

He had in his service a number of Inspectors and, after the Margarine Distribution Scheme had been introduced, a number of Distribution Officers, who perambulated the Division making inquiries and paying surprise visits to traders and to Executive Officers, and who kept him well informed on all matters affecting

the control and distribution of food. From the reports which they furnished every Saturday morning it was easy to ascertain how the Orders were being observed in different districts, whether Food Control Committees and Executive Officers were performing their duties efficiently, and what weaknesses or flaws became visible when the Ministry's schemes for distribution were put into practice. Every Inspector and Distribution Officer had his own ground, which he covered like a commercial traveller, but occasionally a temporary exchange was made, and at times a number of them were concentrated on some particular town or district where there was reason to believe that the Ministry's orders were being evaded or set at defiance.

When it is remembered that the Commissioner was also in daily receipt of numerous letters from Committees, local authorities, traders, Labour organizations and members of the general public it will be recognised that his knowledge of what was going on in the Division and of the way in which the system of control was working was extensive and peculiar. The information which he acquired from one place was often of use in dealing with circumstances arising in another, for it frequently happened that the same problems were exercising the brains of Committees in widely different localities about the same time. In order that this information—or selected parts of it—might be disseminated amongst Committees and that they might be advised upon different points arising in connection with their work, at a very early period there was instituted a *Weekly Circular*, similar to the printed *Weekly Bulletin* which was issued by the Ministry, both of which were highly appreciated by Executive Officers.

The North-West Division, as has already been pointed out, included the counties of Lancashire and

Cheshire, Cumberland and Westmorland, but four places in Derbyshire, viz., the urban districts of Glossop and New Mills and the rural districts of Glossop Dale and Hayfield, were also added to it for convenience of administration. It stretched from the rural district of Malpas in the extreme south of Cheshire to the Solway Firth in the north, and from the borders of Northumberland, Yorkshire and Derbyshire on the east to the Irish Sea, and contained 235 Food Control Committee districts with a population of nearly six millions. It was the most populous, and there was some justification for regarding it as being, with the possible exception of London, the most important of all the Divisions. Its inhabitants were employed in a large number of the most widely varying industries. Lancashire was given over to cotton, coal, iron and steel, and other manufactures ; the Cheshire plain was dotted with fertile farms, which furnished supplies of milk and cheese ; while the pastoral counties of Cumberland and Westmorland produced herds of cattle and sheep. Besides several industrial towns with populations of over 100,000, it contained the large commercial city of Manchester and the great port and warehouse of Liverpool, the importance of which, from a food standpoint, it would be impossible to exaggerate. Whether or not the importance of the North-West Division was unduly exalted may be disputed, but it will at least be agreed that it was no small or contemptible kingdom that the new Divisional Commissioner was called upon to rule.

I am not sure whether the choice of Preston as the headquarters of the Division was dictated by the fact that the Divisional Commissioner was resident there, or was due to other considerations. In any event, it was undoubtedly the best selection that could have been made. Though it was a small place when

compared with Manchester and Liverpool, yet it had this advantage over them—that it was situated as nearly as possible in the centre of the Division. Moreover, being on the main line of the London and North-Western Railway, and an important junction for trains to East and West Lancashire, it possessed excellent railway facilities. In addition, it was one of the oldest boroughs in the kingdom, the seat of the government of the county, the capital of the rich agricultural district known as the Fylde, and an important market town; while there is no doubt that its selection obviated the difficulty of deciding between the rival claims of Manchester and Liverpool.

The position of Divisional Commissioner was offered in the first instance to Sir Harcourt Clare, the Clerk of the Peace and the Clerk to the County Council of Lancashire, whose abilities as an adviser and an administrator are recognised far beyond the boundaries of the county which he serves. The duties of the offices which he held made it impossible for Sir Harcourt Clare to accept, but he recommended that Mr. Edward Bohane, the Secretary of the Royal Lancashire Agricultural Society, should be invited to undertake the office. Owing to the public spirit of the Society, who not only consented to release Mr. Bohane temporarily from his duties but placed their premises, Derby House, Winckley Square, Preston, at the disposal of the Ministry of Food, Mr. Bohane was able to accept the post, and took up his duties on September 26th, 1917.

Mr. Bohane's training and experience admirably fitted him for his new duties. The Royal Lancashire Agricultural Society's annual show is held each year in a different city or town in the county, and in order to supervise the arrangements it is necessary for the Secretary to take up his abode in the place where the

show is to be held for two or three months prior to its opening. Having been responsible for this work for a number of years, Mr. Bohane had not only obtained an intimate knowledge of the special characteristics of different parts of Lancashire, but he had become acquainted with members of city and town councils and their public officials, many of whom he was to meet in his new rôle.

Of even greater service to him was the faculty for organization which his work had developed. At the beginning there was inevitably a certain amount of confusion, arising from the fact that he was suddenly called upon to undertake arduous duties for which not the slightest preparation had been made, and in the performance of which there was no previous experience or knowledge upon which to rely for guidance. The Society's premises also speedily became too small to house the staff which it was necessary to engage to cope with the steadily increasing flow of work, and in April 1918 Headquarters were removed to a large house close by, No. 13, Winckley Square. By that time, however, the work had been systematised and co-ordinated, certain lines had been marked out, and different departments had been assigned to Assistant Commissioners, so that though new schemes were constantly being issued by the Ministry they were easily assimilated and dealt with.

Assistant Commissioners

The first Assistant Commissioners to be appointed were Mr. C. E. Linaker, of Frodsham, an estate agent, who acted as second in command in the county of Cheshire, until the importance of the subject made it necessary for him to devote the whole of his energies to the control of milk ; and Major H. F. Freke Evans, D.S.O., who, after a short stay, left to take up the

position of Assistant Commissioner for Transport in the Eastern Division. On December 19th, 1917, the writer, who had been doing "three months' hard" as Executive Officer to the Barrow-in-Furness Food Control Committee, joined the staff, and was followed in the New Year by Councillor E. J. Andrew, an architect, of Preston, who had been rendering valuable services to the authorities for the previous two years as military representative. About the same time Mr. T. Fairbrother, the Treasurer to the Borough of Chorley, was made Divisional Accountant, and Mr. L. Cotman, the Clerk to the Justices of Walton-le-Dale, was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement; while shortly afterwards Mr. A. W. Ladyman, the Clerk to the Justices of the Hundred of Amounderness, was brought in to assist the latter in this important branch of work.

In the middle of February there arrived from the Western Front Captain L. J. Caffrey, M.C., who had been brought up in Oldham, the native place of Mr. J. R. Clynes, and was an intimate friend of the third Food Controller. In the course of a varied career he had become well acquainted with the leading men in the Labour and Trade Union movements, and was sent to us in order to render assistance should trouble arise in those quarters. Luckily, no such trouble ever occurred, and Captain Caffrey was not interrupted in his work as Assistant Commissioner for Distribution.

He was followed by Mr. E. Billing, who had been in the Warrington Food Office, and by Lieutenant W. R. Gibson, who had been invalided out of the army. Mr. Billing's main duty was to deal with a scheme for the granting of extra rations to heavy industrial workers which the Ministry had introduced, and when more favourable food prospects led up to its abandonment Mr. Billing left shortly afterwards.

Lieutenant Gibson was one of those unfortunate persons who were as much victims of the war as those who were killed in the trenches. The experiences he had undergone and the injuries he had received had produced a state of nervous depression or melancholia from which he never recovered, and, to the grief of his colleagues, he shot himself within two months of his joining us.

At the time of Mr. Bohane's appointment the control of road transport was in the hands of the Board of Trade, but accommodation for Lieut.-Col. Rea, their local transport officer, was found in our offices. Within a few months, however, road transport arrangements, so far as they related to the conveyance of foodstuffs, were taken over by the Ministry of Food, and Mr. C. le M. Gosselin, the managing director of Vineys—a firm of motor haulage contractors and carrying agents—was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Transport. This duplication of offices, which certainly appeared to be unnecessary, was afterwards avoided when the direction and supervision of road transport, whether connected with the carrying of food or not, was transferred from the Board of Trade to the Ministry of Food.

Somewhat later Mr. A. E. Magee, who had been head of the Liverpool Food Office under Mr. Pickmere, the Town Clerk and Honorary Executive Officer, was taken over in order that he might superintend the work of Food Offices and the arrangements made by Committees for carrying it out, and, if necessary, carry on that work in any case in which a Food Control Committee was temporarily deprived of the services of their Executive Officer. It was found, however, that these duties were not very onerous, and he was at an early date associated with Mr. Linaker in the more arduous work of milk control.

The introduction of a jam distribution scheme was followed by the appointment of Mr. R. B. Munro, a traveller for a large paper firm, as Assistant Commissioner for Jam, with Lieutenant T. C. Myerscough, who, in the halcyon days before the war, had been a journalist, as his assistant.

In July 1918 the arrival of Mr. Burdett Sellers, who had been a miller and connected with the corn trade, to take charge of the new department created to administer the Cereals (Restriction) Order, 1918, completed the tale of the internal Assistant Commissioners, and the changes that took place later were due to the retirement of individuals or the abolition of the offices which they held, consequent upon the more favourable food conditions which ensued as a result of the Armistice.

The following table sets out the names of the Divisional Commissioner's staff and the subjects with which they dealt in the latter half of the year 1918 :

NAME	OFFICE	SUBJECTS
E. J. Andrew	Deputy	Rationing, military exemptions, general.
H. W. Clemesha	Senior Assistant Commissioner	Meat, sugar, bread, rationing.
L. J. Caffrey	Chief Distribution Officer	Margarine, bacon, ham, and lard.
C. E. Linaker	Assistant Commissioner for Milk	Milk.
A. E. Magee	Assistant Commissioner	Food Control Committees, milk.
R. B. Munro	Jam Distribution Officer	Jam.
T. C. Myerscough	Assistant Commissioner	Jam, general.

NAME	OFFICE	SUBJECTS
B. Sellers	Chief Grain Officer	Grain and Cereals.
C. le M. Gosselin	Assistant Commissioner for Transport	Transport of food.
T. Fairbrother	Divisional Accountant	Finance.
L. Cotman	Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement	Enforcement of Orders.
A. W. Ladyman	Assistant Commissioner	Enforcement of Orders.

It will be seen that it was a somewhat heterogeneous collection of individuals that had been gathered together to carry out the work of the new Ministry. Their politics were as varied as their callings. While the majority were orthodox Liberals or Conservatives, Captain Caffrey's views were reputed to be extreme and bloodthirsty. We were not paid, however, to discuss politics, Labour problems, or theories of social reconstruction, nor, until the year 1918 had come to a close, had we much time to do so. The only political party with which we came into contact was the Labour Party, and that was only incidentally. It was one of our duties to try to keep our people contented, and as criticism from the Labour Party is, on most subjects, generally the severest and not always well informed, Mr. Bohane secured as one of his Distribution Officers Mr. C. H. Pearce, of Manchester, whose duty it was not only to see that margarine and other foodstuffs were properly distributed, but to act as peripatetic lecturer to Trade and Labour Councils and other similar bodies. The Ministry in London from time to time summoned conferences of representatives of Trade Unions and Labour organizations at which the Ministry's schemes were expounded and objections answered, but so far as I know no other Division except the North-West ever adopted a similar policy.

There can be no doubt that the salary paid to Mr. Pearce was money well spent. The Assistant Commissioners supplied him with the latest information upon the subjects with which they respectively dealt, and thus enabled him to correct many misapprehensions and ill-founded rumours which were causing unrest in the minds of the public. At the end of his address questions were asked : some, of course, were simply hostile, but the majority were put in good faith and were designed to obtain knowledge on certain points that had been troubling the questioners. Occasionally instances were given by members of the audience of the faulty working of the Ministry's schemes, or allegations were made that a particular district or a particular retailer was able to obtain larger or better supplies than another. These cases were always investigated, and though it frequently turned out that the charges were without foundation or much exaggerated the results of the inquiries were communicated to the complainants, who had at least the satisfaction of knowing that they had not been overlooked.

We were nearly overwhelmed with work at first—the office had to be kept open on Sundays—and it was surprising that we got through it as well as we did. The memoranda and leaflets, the notes and special instructions that issued from the Ministry were so numerous and detailed, and related to so many articles of food that it soon became impossible to be familiar with them all. In the early days more than half the time that we spent in answering the questions that rained upon us was devoted to searching the instructions we had received, in order that we might ascertain the answers. Many Executive Officers had had no experience in construing orders, while others preferred to absolve themselves of responsibility by obtaining the opinion of the Divisional Commissioner. As a

natural result our post bag was large and our telephone calls numerous. Before the year 1918 was far advanced it became obvious that no single person could deal with the whole of the subject or make himself acquainted with every side of Food Control. In these circumstances some specialization became necessary, and certain subjects were assigned to specific individuals. On the other hand, the office was never divided into watertight compartments, and no Assistant Commissioner ever refused to undertake a matter merely because he considered that it ought to be done by another. In fact, certain subjects were on the border line, and had any such attitude been adopted they might have been neglected altogether. If the Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement desired to know how any particular foodstuff was dealt with in practice by the Ministry he consulted the Assistant Commissioner to whom it had been assigned, or if the latter individual wished to satisfy himself as to how his subject was affected by the general rationing arrangements, he in turn called upon one of his colleagues whose duty it was to make himself acquainted with them.

As the Ministry of Food was a new institution it was not so fettered in its actions as other Government departments were. There were no precedents which had to be strictly followed, sufficient time had not elapsed to allow of any routine being established, and the chilly hand of the permanent civil service had not been laid upon it to check its vitality. The heads of the different sections in London had certainly been brought in from other departments, but they had been cut adrift from the traditions of the special régimes of which they had formed part, while the necessity under which they found themselves of having to grapple with entirely new problems, and of having to meet

situations which were quite strange to them, naturally induced a less formal and restricted method of action. If this was true of the Ministry in London, it was still truer of Divisional Headquarters. If there was one thing upon which we prided ourselves more than another it was our freedom from the bonds of red tape. We were individuals brought together by the circumstances of the Great War, occupying positions which we all knew must be of a more or less temporary character. We had our own businesses or professions to which sooner or later we should return, and our future in life was not dependent upon the work we were doing for the moment or the goodwill of our superiors. We were, therefore, not in a position to be overawed by officials of the Ministry, however highly placed they were, and if we thought that our people were being harshly dealt with by any of the regulations that were issued we contested them with spirit and determination. When the Bacon Section upheld the action of certain wholesalers in conduct of which Captain Caffrey disapproved his threats to the Section called forth a special letter to Mr. Bohane on this Assistant Commissioner's methods of conducting official correspondence. Again, the allowance to wholesalers for distributing margarine appeared to Captain Caffrey to be unduly generous for the work done, and a sharp epistolary duel with the authorities was concluded by a letter in which, undaunted by official reproof, he alleged that, if the Ministry continued to allow margarine wholesalers the profits they were then obtaining, the wealth the latter would accumulate would make Rockefeller's pile look like the proceeds of a pickpocket's tour in Scotland !

If the other Assistant Commissioners did not indulge in such picturesque language as the Assistant

Commissioner for Distribution they had no hesitation in plainly stating their case and sticking to their points. Still, to do the Ministry justice, they were, as a rule, pleased that the objections which the practical working of their schemes or regulations revealed should be pointed out, and many alterations and modifications of them were made as a result of criticisms that we made, or that we received and passed on from Executive Officers. They were content—at any rate, at first—that considerable latitude should be allowed to the Divisional Commissioner and his staff, and though we never had Home Rule in the North-West Division we certainly did not trouble the Ministry more than was necessary, nor in turn were we interfered with unduly.

Military Exemptions

The subjects which were assigned to the different Assistant Commissioners have been indicated above, but the work which was done by Mr. Andrew in obtaining exemptions from military service for “pivotal” men in food producing, distributing, or preserving businesses seems to call for a word or two of explanation, as it was rather outside the ordinary run of the duties imposed upon the Divisional Commissioner and his staff. It was, of course, necessary that those individuals in flour mills, margarine factories, sugar refineries, and similar works whose services were essential for the carrying out of certain processes should be retained in their occupations, or the food supplies not only of civilians but of the army would have suffered. Their retention, however, was no easy matter. The need of men for the army was urgent, and the National Service authorities required to be satisfied that the men whom it was desired to keep back were of such importance to the industries in which they were engaged that they could not be

substituted, and that their withdrawal meant the crippling of a food business. The fullest details had to be obtained and supplied, numerous letters to be written and many interviews to be held with the National Service authorities, both at Liverpool and Newcastle, before these exemptions were allowed. As Mr. Andrew had been engaged for more than two years prior to his joining the Divisional staff in helping to secure men for the army, and had thus become well acquainted with the regulations governing exemptions, this subject was naturally handed over to him and the one-time gamekeeper was converted into a poacher. This branch of our work was far from being the least important, though it was one of which the general public had little or no knowledge, while the claims that had to be dealt with were so many that they kept Mr. Andrew almost fully occupied during the larger part of the year 1918, until the signing of the Armistice put an end to recruiting.

The Divisional Accountant

Though the Divisional Accountant had other work to do, especially in connection with the Ministry's schemes for the control of potatoes, his primary duty was to supervise the accounts of Food Control Committees, who were required to furnish quarterly statements showing their expenditure, together with their receipts, if they had any. At the outset each Food Control Committee did what was right in its own eyes, paid such salaries as it thought fit, and purchased such office requisites as it deemed necessary. The money for these purposes was advanced by the local authority, who were reimbursed by the Ministry all such sums as the Divisional Commissioner—or, in practice, the Divisional Accountant—certified to be *necessary* expenditure. Gradually the comparative

freedom enjoyed by Committees was restricted, salaries or increases of salaries, together with details of any proposed expenditure that was out of the ordinary, were submitted for approval, while furniture was provided by the Board of Works.

Trading by Food Control Committees

Certain Committees entered into trading transactions, some of which, like milk distribution schemes, were duly authorized by the Food Controller, some of which were not. In the case of the former the Ministry undertook responsibility for any losses that were incurred, but in the case of the latter, while repudiating any liability, they claimed any profits that might be made. A few instances may be given of the activities of Food Control Committees in this direction. The Lancaster Food Control Committee bought and sold imported meat and tea, and manufactured jam, and made a profit on each of these transactions. The Committee was led to engage in the purchase and sale of meat in order to assist the butchers to obtain supplies, but they continued to do so long after the butchers should have assumed the responsibility themselves. Much the same state of affairs existed for a time at Barrow-in-Furness, where the butchers at first, for some reason or other, omitted or declined to form a local Committee and to appoint a buyer and distributor, so that the Food Control Committee had to undertake the duties of buying and distributing for them. When meat was rationed the total requirements of a district were calculated from the numbers of customers registered with the butchers, and were either bought alive in a market or obtained dead from wholesalers, or despatched in a frozen condition by importers. It was expected of the butchers that they would form an organization to order the authorized

supplies, to pay for them and to distribute them, but in several cases they neglected to do so and the Food Control Committee did the work for them in order that the meat supply might be maintained. For the services they rendered to the trade they charged a small percentage, which was merely intended to cover any expenses they might incur, but in some cases this had amounted to a considerable sum when the control of meat came to an end.

The Workington Food Control Committee traded in milk, margarine, tea, and sugar. In the shortage of tea the Ministry occasionally authorized supplies to be obtained from some wholesaler who was able to provide them, but as the wholesaler had probably had no previous transactions with the retailers of the district he would only consign the tea to the Food Control Committee. As it could not be obtained in any other way the Committee bought it and paid for it, and as there were nearly always a few incidental expenses in connection with the transaction which it was difficult to add to the cost, the venture, generally, as in the case of Workington, showed a slight loss.

When the margarine distribution scheme was first put forward the share of the work that was assigned to Committees was considerable. Certain modifications, however, were introduced at a very early stage, and the trade was allowed to take a larger part in it and to receive a remuneration for so doing. The Workington Committee, however, was not disposed to relinquish the position in the scheme which had originally been allotted to it, and continued to deal in margarine in spite of Ministerial protests and objections.

The Fleetwood Committee traded not only in meat and milk, but in Irish butter and blackberries. What the circumstances were that led them to deal in butter I cannot now recall, but their venture in

blackberries was an isolated affair. Some hundreds of baskets of this fruit were left derelict at Fleetwood in the railway strike of September and October 1919, and were taken charge of by the Committee, who disposed of them to the local Co-operative Society. The commission on the transaction amounted to a nice little sum, which was, of course, appropriated by the Ministry.

Trading in milk stood on a different footing. When the milk retailers in any district refused to sell at the prices approved of by the Food Controller, and went on strike, the Committee was empowered to requisition the milk and to make the necessary arrangements for its distribution and sale. A list of the more important cases in which these powers were exercised will be given later, but it will be agreed that it was no slight undertaking in which the Committees were engaged, and that the work consequently cast upon the Divisional Accountant was no trumpery matter, when it is stated that the Bury Food Control Committee received from its sales of milk no less a sum than £23,866.

In many towns the Borough Treasurer acted as treasurer to the Food Control Committee. The Borough Treasurer would have been almost more than human who could have resisted the temptation to charge against the Ministry, at times, certain items of expenditure which should properly have been borne by his council. The detection of instances in which this had been done, or of other instances in which the Borough Treasurer had endeavoured to saddle the Ministry with an undue proportion of the interest on the council's overdraft, was a never-failing source of joy to Mr. Fairbrother, and to his successor, Mr. S. Williams.

The allowances that were made to Assistant Commissioners for travelling expenses did not offer any

inducement to them to take journeys up and down the Division. Whatever charges of waste of money may be made against the Ministry, it cannot be said that they were extravagant in this respect. A sum of five shillings was allowed to an Assistant Commissioner if he was away from the office for ten hours, and nothing if he was away for less. It is true that he could charge for "incidentals," but Mr. Fairbrother's views on the interpretation of this word, as well as his general attitude as to the necessity of taxi-cabs, were felt to be so narrow and illiberal that we produced an Order, entitled the Assistant Commissioners (Payment of Expenses) Order, 1918, in which the whole subject was dealt with from a more generous standpoint. The amusement we obtained from this deception nearly compensated us for the money of which the Divisional Accountant had from time to time deprived us!

CHAPTER II

Food Control Committees

IT is questionable whether, before describing the North-West Division and its Headquarters, one ought not to have first dealt with the Local Food Control Committees, which constituted the foundation of the Ministry's scheme for the introduction of rationing and for making its administration local in character. Whether that be so or not, we are now free to turn to the bodies upon whom the success or the failure of the new project mainly depended. Generally, Committees consisted of twelve persons, and, as has already been said, they were appointed by the local authority. It was not necessary that the members of the Committee should also be members of the local authority, but it was required that one should be a woman and one other a representative of Labour. It was also suggested that the local Co-operative Society or Societies should be represented, but the appointment of other food traders was not encouraged, which caused some little feeling on the part of Grocers' Associations and other similar bodies. In practice, the local authority generally appointed half or more of the members from its own body—a not unnatural precaution in view of the provision that the expenses of the Committee were payable in the first instance by the authority, who could only recover from the Ministry such moneys as were generally or specially authorized to be spent. In practice, also, the numbers of both women and Labour representatives generally exceeded the minimum laid down by the order, for most authorities considered, firstly, that the food question was largely a domestic one upon which the views of women were entitled to full expression, and, secondly, that by giving liberal representation to

trade unions and other Labour organizations they would allay any suspicion of partiality and thus rob criticism of much of its bitterness.

The powers and duties of Food Control Committees were not defined, but were expressed to be such as were assigned to them by the Food Controller, and in exercising them they were to comply with such directions as might be given by that personage from time to time.

The Executive Officer

Their first duties were to appoint an Executive Officer and to secure suitable accommodation for a local food office. Of the two, the first was incomparably the most important. A Food Control Committee might carry on its work in small and inadequate offices inconveniently situated, and do it with satisfaction to the community ; but a Committee that did not possess an efficient Executive Officer was handicapped indeed. However public-spirited the members of the Committee might be, however determined to carry out the instructions they received and to enforce the regulations that were issued, they were not daily and hourly in touch with the public and the tradespeople, or called upon, like the Executive Officer, to deal with cases as to which his instructions gave him no guidance, to correct, to instruct, to cajole, and—chief of his tasks—to endeavour to obtain the willing co-operation of all classes in carrying out the policy of the Ministry.

In estimating the services that Executive Officers rendered it is necessary to remember that food had never previously been either rationed or controlled in this country, and that consequently the new Ministry that was created for this purpose had no stocks of experience upon which to draw. No doubt there

were certain statistics in the possession of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Board of Trade, but these only served to show the magnitude of the task that had to be undertaken, and not the way to accomplish it. In these circumstances the Ministry wisely sought assistance from persons connected with the various food trades, but even the most carefully-selected advisory committee drawn from a body of traders might easily stumble and fall into errors when called upon to assist in framing regulations that were to be of wide or universal application. Another source of error lay in the possibility that an advisory committee might not be representative of every section of the trade. For instance, in the early days we had sometimes reason to think that the Ministry relied too much upon the advice of wholesalers to the neglect of the interests of retailers, with the result that the different schemes that were produced were unequal or unfair. Such as they were, however, they were issued to the world, and it was the duty of the Executive Officer to put them into operation and to make them work with as little friction as possible. If he was wise he either prevailed upon his Committee to request the local associations of grocers, or butchers, or milk retailers to assist them with their advice, or he consulted reliable tradesmen as to the custom and practice of their several trades. In addition, he possibly bought or borrowed copies of *The Grocer*, or of *The Meat Trades Journal*, and made himself acquainted with the trade view of the Ministry's schemes. When the writer was Executive Officer at Barrow-in-Furness the first-named paper formed part of his Sunday reading, and proved to be extraordinarily interesting, if somewhat lacking in excitement. In ways like these, and by practical experience of the working of the Orders, the Executive Officer became acquainted with the weak

spots in the regulations, and either devised remedies, or, if this was beyond his power, made suggestions which were not infrequently adopted later by the Ministry.

From every point of view it was much more necessary that the Executive Officer should be conscientious and efficient than that the members of his Committee should be so. A poor Committee was a misfortune, but a weak Executive Officer was a disaster. When it unfortunately happened that the two were found in combination language fails me to describe the trouble that it caused.

The importance of the Executive Officer was fully recognized by the public. No matter how Lord Devonport or Lord Rhondda, or any of their successors, might be described in the *Gazette*, to the man in the street—or, perhaps one should say, to the woman in the street—the Executive Officer was “the Food Controller,” and was always referred to by that title. Like Janus, one of the ancient Roman deities, he was considered to have two faces : one benign and gracious, which he showed when he issued ration cards or ration books which enabled you to obtain sugar, margarine, or meat, the other forbidding and awful, which was visible when he suspected you of some breach of the manifold regulations of the Ministry.

Licensing of New Retail Businesses

Fortunately for the Ministry and for everyone, the standard of efficiency of both Committees and Executive Officers was high, and it was more frequently found necessary to curb their enthusiasm and to restrain them from interfering in matters that were outside their province than to urge them to greater exertions. For instance, when an order called the Retail Businesses (Licensing) Order was issued, with the object of protecting the interests of serving or

discharged soldiers by making it necessary for persons who wished to open new businesses, or new branches of existing ones, to obtain a licence for the purpose, Committees were asked to make inquiries and recommendations. The main question upon which it was desired that they should concentrate their attention was whether or not the proposed new business would adversely affect any soldier who had left a business to join up, or who had been discharged and opened or reopened a shop. Committees so thoroughly appreciated the fact that the object of the order was to restrain the opening of new shops that great difficulty was often experienced in inducing them to allow one to be opened, even where there was no discharged soldier in the neighbourhood. They constituted themselves censors of morals, and withheld their approval because the applicant's character left something to be desired. They usurped the duties of medical officers of health and sanitary inspectors, and turned down applications because the premises were not suitable. They came to the conclusion that there were enough businesses of the kind in a street or district, and refused to allow more to be opened ; or, moved to pity by the hard case of the widow and the orphan, or the old tradesman, they declined to compel them to face competition which would probably prove too severe for them. In so doing they were no doubt actuated by the best of motives, but it had to be pointed out to them that not only were they exceeding their duty, but that they were stifling competition and thus preventing prices from falling.

Or, again, the butchers would complain to them of the grading at the local market, or of the quality or condition of meat allocated to them, well knowing that if they had just ground for complaint they should have addressed themselves to the Live Stock Com-

missioner or to the Area Meat Agent, but hoping to strengthen a case that was not too good by enlisting the sympathy and support of the Committee. The Committee nearly always rose to the bait so skilfully thrown to them by the wily butchers. Was an unfortunate body of traders, demanded the Committee, to be robbed and plundered by a set of incompetent officials? More important still, were the members of the Committee and their people to be fed on meat of an inferior quality to that supplied to the inhabitants of other towns and districts? In such circumstances the Divisional Commissioner generally refrained from pointing out to the Committee that these were matters with which, strictly speaking, they were not concerned, but addressed soothing words to them and promised that inquiries should be made and the result made known to them.

The high standard of efficiency of Committees and Executive Officers, to which reference has been made, was probably mainly due to the fact that the majority of the members of the former were also members of the appointing authorities, while the Executive Officer was in many cases either the clerk to the council or an official of some department of it. We were fortunate enough to number amongst our Executive Officers the town clerks of many important boroughs and cities, who frequently acted in an honorary capacity. Amongst them may be mentioned Mr. Pickmere, of Liverpool; Mr. Collingwood, of Carlisle; Mr. Feltham, of Crewe; Mr. Jarrett, of Southport; Mr. Tyrer, of Wigan; Mr. Hickson, of Rochdale; Mr. Plant, of Congleton; Mr. Dobson, of Kendal; and Mr. Croasdell, of Whitehaven. In some of the rural districts solicitors acted as part-time officers, and we also had the services of a few ladies like Mrs. Saxon, of Stockport, and Miss Howarth,

of Ramsbottom. Amongst the rest were to be found men of various callings and as various qualifications. There was a barrister, a constructional engineer, an accountant, an ex-schoolmaster, a retired grocer, a retired butcher, a commercial traveller, a cycle dealer, a farmer, a political agent, etc. Drawn, as they were, from so many classes of the community, they regarded the Ministry's proposals from many points of view, and being merely temporary civil servants who had added this work to that which they were already doing, or who had sought the appointment because the war had for a time injured their businesses or put them out of employment, they did not hesitate to criticise either the Ministry, or its servants, or its schemes. There was a candour, a freedom, and a breeziness in some of their letters that was most refreshing. If an Executive Officer was of the opinion that a regulation issued by the Food Controller was stupid, he said so. In fact, "he said it very loud and clear, he went and shouted in his ear." In our opinion one Executive Officer carried this virtue to excess. Our attempts to explain matters to him, or to reason with him, merely called forth long and ever longer letters in which we were accused of inefficiency, negligence, discourtesy, and other official crimes. Our natural resentment was tempered by two facts. Firstly, he was an extremely able and conscientious Officer, who grudged neither time nor trouble in the service of his Committee. Secondly, we were not the only sufferers, for we learned, with outward concern but inward glee, that the Ministry in London believed that he kept a whole-time clerk fully employed in writing abusive letters to them !

Food Economy Committees

Before the end of September, 1917, all Committees had selected and appointed their Executive Officers,

and the latter, with the aid of such staffs as they had been able to secure, were engaged in studying and putting into operation those arrangements which had been devised for the rationing of sugar and were to come into force on January 1st, 1918. This occupied most of the Executive Officer's time, but the number of his duties was growing so rapidly that he frequently found that his day had not enough hours in it. Just at this moment instructions came that Food Control Committees were to appoint Food Economy Committees, which were to engage in propaganda work with a view to persuading people to reduce their present rate of consumption of essential foodstuffs, by such methods as the holding of meetings, the distribution of leaflets, the arranging of practical demonstrations of economical cookery, and the setting up of National Kitchens. In further pursuance of those objects the public was invited to join the League of National Safety, which was directed by Sir Arthur Yapp, who had been concerned in organizing the Y.M.C.A., and each person who gave the necessary pledge to assist in the checking of waste received a certificate of membership together with a blue anchor badge.

On the receipt of these instructions the Executive Officer dutifully took the necessary steps to set up a Food Economy Committee, which found, on its appointment, that its sphere of usefulness had been so reduced by the march of events as to be almost non-existent. How this happened can be explained in a sentence or two. The fact was that the setting up of these Committees coincided with the first appearance of indisputable evidence that the shortage of food, which had been talked about so much and so long, was actually upon us. Queues had begun to form up in the streets of the towns, and customers to go from shop to shop in the endeavour to satisfy their needs. At a

time when persons were often unable to obtain sufficient supplies of certain foodstuffs it would have been a mockery to have continued to preach the virtues of doing with less. So the literature, the leaflets, the memoranda, the instructions, the pledges, the certificates and the blue anchors—which together must have cost many thousands of pounds—were suffered to lie about until they got fly-blown and dusty ; Sir Arthur Yapp disappeared, and the Executive Officer was free to get on with the real work of the Ministry, which was the rationing of the people.

National Kitchens

Very little more success attended the Ministry's efforts to induce local authorities to set up National Kitchens. At Barrow-in-Furness the matter was passed backwards and forwards between the Town Council and the Food Economy Committee until it eventually fell to the ground. The very name of National Kitchens hindered such chance of success as the suggestion had. In the towns it was inevitably associated with the soup kitchen and the provision of cheap meals on a charitable basis, which were unfortunately only too well known when industrial distress occurred. As a matter of fact, the term was a misnomer, for these institutions were intended to be restaurants where meals were to be provided at a cheap rate, but at a profit and not a loss. Still, even if the prejudice which the name created had never existed, it was difficult to see, if cheap restaurants could be made to pay, why they should not have been created previously by private enterprise and been already in existence. For the payment of part of the cost of starting one—which the Ministry undertook to do—could not compensate for the disadvantage that a local authority would be under in running a restaurant

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when compared with a private individual or a firm who had to make a living out of it. The truth of the matter was that there was no demand for National Kitchens, and that they had no reasonable chance of success unless the shortage of food became so acute that the ordinary man or woman was unable to purchase it. A Roman Catholic clergyman whose church was situated in a working-class district in Barrow-in-Furness hit the nail on the head when he said that the working man would have his meals at home so long as he could, and would not take his wife and family out to an "eating house" except as a last resort. The clerk and the typist might go to a café, or to a restaurant, where a light meal was provided at a cheap rate, but the working man either took his dinner with him to his work in a tin or basket, or went home to eat it in the bosom of his family. The fried fish shop he knew, the cold supper bar where he could buy tripe or "trotters" he was acquainted with, but a restaurant was not in his line. No doubt the scheme commended itself to certain persons, such as the theoretical socialist who was prepared, on general principles, to support any and every proposal for national as opposed to individual enterprise, for a number of these institutions were opened in various towns, but they were sickly plants and drooped and withered until in the process of time they died.

Though these experiments of the Ministry were not a success, yet their efforts to promote economy both in food and in other materials were not entirely wasted. There was a fair demand for the leaflets which were published by the Ministry, giving various methods of cooking vegetables, etc., and recipes for simple and inexpensive dishes ; while attention was also directed to the value of certain foodstuffs which were not so

popular as others but formed excellent substitutes for those which were not available. By way of example, I propose to quote a short extract from a press notice on carrots, which even now may not be wholly without interest :

“ Weight for weight, carrots stand third in nourishing value on the list of roots and tubers, potatoes and parsnips taking first and second places respectively. Carrots, which, like all roots and tubers, contain less water and more nourishing material than green vegetables, have, therefore, higher nutritive qualities than any of the following, namely : turnips, swedes, cabbages, sprouts, cauliflowers, onions, and leeks. Carrots also contain a fair proportion of sugar in their composition, and this adds to their nourishing value.”

Further, the campaign was not directed against the waste of foodstuffs only, and had positive results in the organized collections of waste-paper and metal scrap that were made in many localities.

In the desire to secure economy in the use not only of food but of all articles that were imported and required shipping, Food Control Committees and their handy men were called upon to endeavour to cut down the motor transport in their districts, with a view to diminishing the consumption of petrol. The general idea was that traders should arrange to pool their transport requirements and select a number of motor lorries and vans from those in their possession to meet the needs of all. In some places the Food Control Committee itself turned the proposal down as unworkable unless compulsory powers were conferred upon them. In others a meeting of traders and vehicle owners was held, but the objections were so many and so strongly held that I do not remember that the idea ever came to fruition anywhere.

Sugar

As the work in connection with the rationing of sugar occupied the largest part of the Executive Officer's time at first, and kept him very busy in the early days after his appointment, it may be as well to indicate the nature of it at once. It will be remembered that the Ministry at first decided to issue family sugar cards, and that the forms of application which were to be filled up by the head of the household contained spaces for the Christian names, surnames, and occupations of the persons residing there, for the ages of his younger children, and for the schools which they attended. It was fortunate that the last item of information was generally given, for when the address of the householder was omitted—as it was in about five or six hundred cases at Barrow-in-Furness—it was frequently possible to obtain it by making inquiries through the school attendance officers. The information given in these forms and in others, when re-registration was imposed, proved of considerable value. In the first place, it furnished the Ministry with figures that enabled them to calculate with some approach to accuracy the requirements of a town or district of any rationed foodstuff, though it should be pointed out that the sugar-buying population might differ considerably from its butter and margarine-buying population, and that again from its meat-buying population. This was accounted for by the fact that the figures did not give the numbers of residents, but of shoppers. In the butter-producing districts of Cumberland and Westmorland many persons refused to eat margarine, and relied for their butter, not upon the shopkeepers, who received supplies of the Government article, but upon the neighbouring farmers. The extent to which such a course of conduct was pursued was reflected in the figures, which sometimes

were rather astonishing, as the following examples will show :

	Sugar-buying population	Butter and Margarine-buying population
Carlisle . . .	65,283	32,971
Kendal . . .	19,350	9,580

Again, the inhabitants of a village near to a market town might be in the habit of getting their groceries in that town on a market day, while preferring to obtain their meat from the local butcher, with the result that the meat-buying population would exceed the sugar-buying population of the place. But, in the absence of special circumstances, the meat-buying population of any particular place was generally less than that of the sugar-buying population. Though we must not overlook the existence of vegetarians, it is believed that the explanation of the disparity is to be found in the omission to register young children. Probably, when the head of a household was a person who was well-to-do, the ration cards of everybody in the house down to the latest arrival were deposited with the butcher, but there must have been many families who were unable to afford the additional rations of meat which the cards of children would have enabled them to obtain. The differences in the figures * were not as a rule very great, but at Liverpool and Manchester they were so striking that it is thought worth while to give them here :

	Sugar-buying population	Butter and Margarine-buying population	Meat-buying population
Liverpool	773,530	582,380	697,773
Manchester	750,597	656,491	678,463

* These figures, as well as those given above, are taken from the return known as R.Stat.2, which was made by Food Control Committees between the 20th November and the 4th December, 1919.

However, as practically everyone consumed sugar, or, at least, was registered with a grocer for it, the statistics of the sugar-buying population furnished a reliable estimate of the population, at a time when the last census returns were more than six years old and great changes had occurred in the population, owing to the extension of existing munition works and the opening of new ones. Incidentally, also, they were of use to the local authorities, as they could be compared with the estimates of the Medical Officer of Health, while an examination of the application forms revealed cases of overcrowding.

No sooner, however, had all the sugar application forms been dealt with and the ration cards been sent out than it was discovered that the family cards were so cumbersome, and involved so many alterations of existing cards and the issue of so many new ones, that it was decided to replace them by cards for individuals. One would have thought that the Ministry might have foreseen this, but though the Executive Officer said some uncomplimentary things as to this lack of foresight which caused him additional work, he readily admitted that the new system was a great improvement. The issuing of cards to families and to individuals was, however, only one part of the Executive Officer's work in connection with the rationing of sugar, for there were proprietors of establishments, such as hotels, restaurants, cafés, boarding-houses, schools, work-houses and asylums, as well as manufacturers of mineral waters, ice cream, chocolate and other commodities, all of whom required supplies, which could only be obtained by them when they held authorities and vouchers issued by a Food Control Committee. Lastly, it was necessary to provide for the requirements of the trade itself which met the demands of all these consumers, and to calculate the quan-

tities to which both retailers and wholesalers were entitled.

It is not necessary to go minutely into the classification that was made of establishments, but a word or two must be said as to hotels, restaurants, and catering establishments, which constituted the most important group. The basis adopted for estimating the quantity of sugar to which these places were entitled was the number of meals served between 5 a.m. and 9-30 p.m., the meals to be included being breakfasts, luncheons (including middle-day dinners), dinners (including suppers and meat teas), and teas. The fact that the number of meals served was used to calculate the amount of sugar an hotel was authorized to obtain did not imply that a resident or visitor was entitled to an allowance of sugar at each or, indeed, at any of the meals placed before him. It was merely a method of calculating the total quantity which might be used in "a public eating place" in any week, and was intended to include the sugar used for cooking purposes as well as that which was served with meals. In fact, to quote the rubric to the Public Meals Order, 1917, it was "rationing by bulk."

In order to prevent hotel keepers and restaurant proprietors obtaining larger supplies of sugar than those to which the number of meals served entitled them they were required to keep a register of meals, unless no meal was served the total charge for which exceeded 1s. 3d.,* exclusive of beverages.

Certain optimistic innkeepers and hotel proprietors, taking a catholic view of the term "meal," promptly claimed an allowance of sugar for sweetening hot drinks. It is needless to say that the claim was as promptly disallowed. But some trouble was experienced in defining the word "teas." Did it

* This amount was subsequently increased.

include "afternoon teas" to be obtained at cafés? Again, if a large drapery establishment was in the habit of providing girl assistants with tea in an afternoon, was this a meal? These and similar queries were frequently received by the Divisional Commissioner, but in most cases they were determined by the Food Control Committees, who exercised their own discretion in dealing with the applications they received.

Supplies of sugar to manufacturers were regulated by the Sugar (Restriction) Order, 1917, which provided, in effect, that they should be limited to 25 per cent of the sugar used by them in their businesses during the year 1915. The severity of this rule was relieved in the case of manufacturers of jam and condensed milk, and special arrangements were generally made with them by the Royal Commission on the Sugar Supply, as it was naturally not desired or intended to cut down the production of these articles to one-fourth of that of the year 1915. Chemists, too, were entitled to draw their reasonable requirements for the making up of prescriptions in full, but it had to be pointed out more than once that this provision could not be extended so as to include supplies of sugar for the manufacture of "Our celebrated cough mixture," or similar articles, which were made for sale to the general public.

Ice Cream

There was, as a rule, little difficulty in arriving at the quantities of sugar to which manufacturers were entitled, but more than one Committee uttered cries of protest at being called upon to authorise supplies for the making of ice cream at a time when sugar was about to be rationed at 8ozs. per head and milk was becoming both scarce and dear. Incidentally I may say that I doubt whether anyone who was connected with the Ministry of Food ever completely

recovered from the feeling of surprise which he experienced on discovering the large quantities of this delicacy that were consumed by the industrial population of Lancashire, and the numbers of persons who made a living by making and selling it. The instructions, however, were clear, and Committees had no option but to issue the necessary authorities, though the protests were not without effect, for an Order was shortly afterwards issued, known as the Ice Cream (Restriction) Order, 1917, which prohibited the sale of ice cream after January 1st, 1918. Had this order been allowed to remain in force without alteration it would have inflicted grave hardship on a number of innocent persons, including many of the allied Italian nation, but in June 1918 its severity was modified by the issuing of a general licence which permitted water ice and ice pudding to be sold, provided that no cream or milk was used in its manufacture, or any sugar, except such as might be contained in the cordials, mineral waters, or essences used.

The variety of products into which sugar entered, and the number of purposes for which it was used, were many, and were nearly all dealt with or referred to in the instructions of the Ministry; but even a super-Ministry could scarcely have anticipated that demands for supplies of it would be made for such objects as the feeding of foals, the curing of hams, and the manufacture of ink for lithography, or that veterinary surgeons would prescribe it for the disease of red water in cattle. These demands were refused on the general principle that sugar was only to be used for food, and this principle was not really departed from when the Ministry sanctioned supplies of sugar for the feeding of bees.

Distribution of Sugar

When the ration cards and the vouchers had all been distributed they were lodged either with retailers or wholesalers, who made a return to the Food Office showing the quantities of sugar they were entitled to receive, the names of the firms from whom they had obtained supplies in the past, and the proportions which they had received from each. Great importance was attached to this last item of information, for though the Royal Commission on Sugar Supplies owned or controlled all the sugar in the country they distributed it through the trade and they had no wish to alter or vary the customary channels of supply. In fact, they went further than that, for they refused to allow a retailer or a wholesaler to change from the supplier with whom he had been in the habit of dealing, unless he could show that he was being improperly treated or that the supplier was a consenting party to the application.

In making out the authorities and vouchers an addition of 15 per cent.* was allowed to cover wastage, to meet the authorized demands of visitors, travellers, soldiers on leave, etc., and to enable the grocer to accumulate a reserve of which he could avail himself in case his four-weekly supply was delayed in delivery. Though this allowance was occasionally used improperly and distributed amongst favoured customers as an addition to their rations, it is difficult to see how the Ministry could have dealt with the position in any other way. Owing to the depletion of stocks and rolling stock, railway transport had become almost hopelessly

* This percentage was subsequently reduced, as it was found that retailers were holding too large stocks, and Committees were authorised to fix such a percentage as would ensure that a retailer should not hold a stock exceeding his average four-weekly sales.

inefficient, and no trader knew when he might expect to receive the goods which he had ordered. This difficulty became greater when the distributing areas for sugar were altered as a precaution of war. When the Germans made their great advance in the spring of 1918 it appeared within the bounds of possibility, if not of probability, that Amiens might fall and the enemy reach the coast and be able to blockade the Thames. This eventuality was taken into account by the powers that be, and it was decided that arrangements should be made for the provisioning of London. The three great storehouses of sugar in the country were London, Liverpool and Glasgow. In order to carry out the decision of the Government, instructions were given that the supplies of sugar in London were to be retained there to meet the requirements of the Metropolis and the Home Counties, that those places in the south and west which had been accustomed to draw on London were to be supplied from Liverpool, and that Glasgow was to provide sugar to those districts north of the Mersey which had formerly dealt with Liverpool. This rearrangement naturally increased the time required for delivery, while wholesalers in Lancashire who were accustomed to obtain their sugar from Liverpool were both mystified and indignant on learning, without explanation, that they were to be supplied from Glasgow.

Cake and Pastry Order

The use of sugar by confectioners was limited, not only by the provision which restricted their supplies of sugar to one-fourth of those used by them in the year 1915, but also by the Cake and Pastry Order, 1917, which totally prohibited the manufacture or sale of crumpets, muffins, tea cakes or fancy bread, or any light or fancy pastries, or any other like article, and only

allowed cakes, buns, scones or biscuits to be made or sold provided they did not contain more than certain fixed percentages of sugar. One has to live in the North to appreciate fully the hardness of heart of a Ministry that could inflict such an Order upon a long suffering people, who had already endured nearly three years of war. The benighted South has never really known what cakes are, and probably recked little of the Order, but upon a county like Lancashire, that produces such delicacies as Eccles cakes, Goosnargh cakes, and Bury simnels, the blow fell heavily indeed. It cannot truthfully be said that we suffered in silence, for there immediately arose endless pother and countless arguments as to what was a crumpet, a muffin, or a scone, and as to the exact difference between a tea cake and a bun. From time to time samples were sent to the Enforcement Branch of the Ministry in London for their opinion on these delicate points, and a promising case was brought to naught on one occasion owing to the fact that by some mischance the samples were eaten!

Sweetmeats

Two other Orders that also caused some commotion may be mentioned here. The first was the Sale of Sweetmeats (Restriction) Order, 1918, which prohibited the sale of sweetmeats on premises the rateable value of which exceeded £40 a year, unless at least 20 per cent. of the gross receipts during the year 1916 of the trades or businesses carried on there had been taken in respect of retail dealings in sweetmeats. I have always been in doubt as to the object the Ministry had in view in issuing this Order. Sweet makers were already restricted in the quantities of sugar they were allowed to use, and this Order could scarcely have any appreciable effect in reducing sales.

One is forced to the conclusion, therefore, that this was an attempt to give some measure of protection to the small shopkeeper, or to the person who relied wholly or mainly upon the sale of sweets and chocolates for a living. Now and again it operated somewhat harshly. For instance, there are small industrial towns and villages in Lancashire where the only shop of any size is the general store of the Co-operative Society. As it could not be urged that 20 per cent. of their gross receipts in 1916 arose from the sale of sweetmeats this branch of their enterprise was shut down, and the unfortunate inhabitants were forced either to buy the inferior varieties on sale at the smaller shops or to go without.

The other Order to which I have referred forbade the sale of sweetmeats in places of public entertainment. This was subsequently revoked, but the sale of sweetmeats in such places was still prohibited after 8 p.m. Our ears have scarcely ceased ringing with the echoes of the controversy which this prohibition aroused.

“Free Sugar”

The rationing of sugar was introduced and carried out with probably less friction than that of any foodstuff, and reflected great credit upon the arrangements made by the Sugar Distribution Branch of the Ministry. It is true that the various schemes they adopted for distributing sugar to householders to enable them to preserve their home-grown fruit were somewhat abused and caused some heartburnings, while the sanction they gave to the sale of “free sugar”* for manufacturing purposes disturbed the peace of mind

* Sugar imported on private account and not by the Royal Commission.

of all those who were responsible for the maintenance of rationing. But these, after all, were small blemishes upon an excellent record, and had all departments been as prompt and as efficient the Ministry would have deserved even better of the country than it did.

CHAPTER III

Local Distribution Schemes

ON January 1st, 1918, when the rationing of sugar came into force, the Ministry's arrangements for the national rationing of other foodstuffs were not completed, but they encouraged Food Control Committees to introduce local rationing or distribution schemes on certain general principles which were laid down in instructions. The method suggested involved the issue of a card, with spaces for each week of its currency to be marked off by the shopkeeper as and when the holder obtained supplies of butter or margarine and tea, or any other articles, such as jam or cheese, which the Committee should decide to ration. The card was divided into parts corresponding with the number of foodstuffs to be rationed, opposite which were counterfoils, which were to be signed by the holder of the card and then detached and lodged with the retailer or retailers with whom he desired to register. Though sugar should not have appeared upon the card, as it had already been dealt with separately, yet it was often included, particularly in the cards issued by those Food Control Committees who took as their model the one issued by the Wallasey Committee, who, I believe, were the first in the field with a scheme. Meat, too, was excluded, as the Ministry had announced its intention of dealing with this foodstuff by a national scheme at an early date. The cards naturally varied very much, both in form and in merit, but as it was desirable that schemes should be introduced without delay we were not disposed to be too critical of them. However, after a while, and after comparison of a number of the cards received, we devised one which was not only free from the objectionable features of some

we had examined, but was simple and not too large. It is reproduced overleaf in order that the reader may compare it with his recollection of the one which was used in his locality.

It was considered desirable that the Food Control Committees of adjoining districts should adopt the same scheme of rationing and the same form of card, and for that purpose the districts over which they presided were divided into groups, which took their name from the town which was considered to be the most important place or the most centrally situated of the places which were associated together. The settling of these groups was no easy matter. It was not so difficult in those cases in which there was a fairly large town surrounded by a number of rural or semi-rural districts, for its headship could not easily be disputed ; but when there was a congeries of places between which there were only slight differences of size and importance but many jealousies and differences of opinion the endeavour to induce them to adopt a uniform scheme called for tact of no ordinary kind. For example, in East Lancashire, though Burnley was the largest town for many miles, the towns and districts in the neighbourhood were of considerable importance and were not disposed to admit its superiority in any particular except that of population, while they were at little pains to conceal their tolerant contempt of one another. It would be easy to exaggerate the feeling that was displayed, but it undoubtedly existed, and in most cases probably had its roots in some far distant period, when the inhabitant of the next parish was a "stranger" at whom one rightly and properly heaved half a brick, though in others it, no doubt, arose from differences of character, which were known and recognized but were not easy to describe or define. Seaside or health resorts were particularly difficult to include in groups

[illegible]

SIZE..... a to $b=5$ inches. a to $c=8$ inches.

a.b.e.f.... Counterfoils, to be detached by the Shopkeeper and forwarded to the Local Food Control Committee, including a spare Counterfoil for use if some other food stuff was rationed.

On the other side appeared the name of the Local Food Control Committee, a space for the name of the user, and a warning as to the misuse of the Card.

that contained the average urban or rural communities, and the reason is not far to seek. While the population of the latter was practically a constant factor and it was to everybody's interest to put into force a rationing scheme which would distribute the restricted supplies equally, that of the former was fluctuating and subject to large increases at certain periods of the year, with the not unnatural result that the Committees directed their attention more to securing ample supplies than to enforcing the rationing of them, or to the fixing of moderate and reasonable prices. One advantage they already had. In pre-war days wholesalers had been accustomed to send large consignments to retailers in these places, and the latter consequently had little difficulty in obtaining a quantity of some foodstuff which was less than they had been accustomed to order but was more than they were entitled to in a general shortage of it. These circumstances were well known at Divisional Headquarters. Appeals that were received from such places were viewed with suspicion, and assistance was not given as a rule until some inquiry had been made. To such an extent did we become imbued with the spirit of rationing that nothing annoyed us more than to learn that some place had received more food than it was entitled to, and we were ever on our guard to prevent this where it was possible. Sometimes we were powerless to do so, for the Food Control Committee went over our heads direct to the Ministry, who did not always in the early days, as they did later, refer the Committee's requests to the Divisional Commissioner. Though our attitude may have been a little over zealous, yet I do not think that there can be any doubt but that generally it was correct. We argued, firstly, that in the case of a general shortage of food, if one locality got more than its share, some other locality was bound to get less ;

and secondly that, rationing schemes or no rationing schemes, if retailers had a surplus of any foodstuff—particularly of any perishable foodstuff, they would undoubtedly sell in excess of the prescribed ration in order to get rid of it. Holding these sentiments and opinions, it will be understood how annoyed we were when the mayor of a borough at the end of his year of office boasted that its inhabitants had never been short of any kind of food. Apart from the considerations mentioned above, we considered such a state of affairs to be a reflection upon the efficiency of the Ministry, and its faithful servants, ourselves.

The scheme for the grouping of the different towns and districts of the Division was devised by the Divisional Commissioner, and as it will probably be of interest to see the way in which the four counties were divided it is set out below. With some alterations and variations it became the basis of all subsequent groupings when it was desired that adjoining Food Control Committees should take concerted action, as, for instance, in agreeing upon or fixing the retail milk prices that should prevail over a fairly wide area.

ACCRINGTON GROUP

Accrington	Haslingden
Bacup	Oswaldtwistle
Church	Rawtenstall
Clayton-le-Moors	

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE GROUP

Ashton-under-Lyne	Hurst
Audenshaw	Hyde
Denton	Limehurst
Dukinfield	Mossley
Glossop	Mottram
Glossop Dale	Stalybridge
Hollingworth	Tintwistle

ALTRINCHAM GROUP

Altrincham	Hale
Ashton-on-Mersey	Knutsford
Bowdon	Sale
Bucklow (part)	

BARROW-IN-FURNESS GROUP

Barrow-in-Furness	Ulverston
Dalton-in-Furness	Ulverston Rural
Grange-over-Sands	

BIRKENHEAD

BLACKBURN GROUP

Blackburn Borough	Darwen
Blackburn Rural	Great Harwood
Clitheroe	Rishton
Clitheroe Rural	

BOLTON GROUP

Bolton	Little Hulton
Blackrod	Little Lever
Farnworth	Turton
Horwich	Westhoughton
Kearsley	Worsley

BURNLEY GROUP

Burnley Borough	Colne
Burnley Rural	Nelson
Barrowford	Padiham
Brierfield	Trawden

BURY GROUP

Bury Borough	Ramsbottom
Bury Rural	Tottington
Heywood	Whitefield
Radcliffe	

CARLISLE GROUP

Carlisle City	Longtown
Carlisle Rural	Penrith Urban
Alston-with-Garrigill	Penrith Rural
Appleby	Shap
Brampton	West Ward
East Westmorland	Wigton Urban'
Holme Cultram	Wigton Rural
Keswick	

CHESTER GROUP

Chester City	Neston and Parkgate
Chester Rural	Tarporley
Ellesmere Port	Tarvin
Hoole	

CREWE GROUP

Crewe	Nantwich Urban
Alsager	Nantwich Rural
Buglawton	Malpas
Congleton Borough	Sandbach
Congleton Rural	

FLEETWOOD AND BLACKPOOL GROUP

Fleetwood	Lytham
Blackpool	Poulton-le-Fylde
Bispham	Preesall
Fylde	St. Annes-on-Sea
Kirkham	Thornton

HOYLAKE AND WEST KIRBY GROUP

Hoylake and West Kirby	Lower Bebington
Bromborough	Wirral
Higher Bebington	

KENDAL GROUP

Kendal	Kirkby Lonsdale
Ambleside	South Westmorland
Grasmere	Windermere

LANCASTER GROUP

Lancaster Borough	Heysham
Lancaster Rural	Lunesdale
Carnforth	Morecambe

LEIGH GROUP

Leigh Borough	Golborne
Leigh Rural	Tyldesley
Atherton	

LIVERPOOL GROUP

Liverpool	Litherland
Bootle	Prescot
Formby	Sefton
Great Crosby	Waterloo-with-Seaforth
Little Crosby	

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD GROUP

Manchester	Irlam
Salford	Prestwich
Barton-upon-Irwell	Stretford
Droylsden	Swinton and Pendlebury
Eccles	Urmston

MID-CHESHIRE GROUP

Bucklow (part)	Middlewich
Northwich Urban	Winsford
Northwich Rural	

OLDHAM GROUP

Oldham	Lees
Chadderton	Middleton
Crompton	Royton
Failsworth	

ORMSKIRK GROUP

Ormskirk	Skelmersdale
Lathom and Burscough	West Lancashire

MACCLESFIELD GROUP

Macclesfield Borough	Bollington
Macclesfield Rural	

PRESTON GROUP

Preston Borough	Fulwood
Preston Rural	Garstang
Adlington	Leyland
Chorley Borough	Longridge
Chorley Rural	Walton-le-Dale
Croston	Withnell

ROCHDALE GROUP

Rochdale	Norden
Littleborough	Wardle
Milnrow	Whitworth

ST. HELENS GROUP

St. Helens	Rainford
Haydock	Whiston
Huyton-with-Roby	Widnes

SOUTHPORT

STOCKPORT GROUP

Stockport	Hayfield
Alderley Edge	Hazel Grove & Bramhall
Bredbury and Romiley	Marple
Cheadle and Gatley	New Mills
Compstall	Wilmslow
Disley	Yardsley-cum-Whaley
Handforth	

WALLASEY

WARRINGTON GROUP

Warrington Borough	Newton-in-Makerfield
Warrington Rural	Runcorn Urban
Lymm	Runcorn Rural

WIGAN GROUP

Wigan Borough	Hindley
Wigan Rural	Ince
Abram	Orrell
Ashton-in-Makerfield	Standish-with-Langtree
Aspull	Upholland
Billinge	

WORKINGTON AND WHITEHAVEN GROUP

Workington	Cockermouth Urban
Whitehaven Urban	Cockermouth Rural
Whitehaven Rural	Egremont
Arledon and Frizington	Harrington
Aspatria	Maryport
Bootle Rural	Millom
Cleator Moor	

In connection with the work of grouping, conferences were held at various centres in order either to induce Committees to adopt a common scheme or to explain and expound the method to be adopted. These conferences, which were attended either by the Divisional Commissioner in person or by one of his assistants, were always interesting and stimulating affairs. Difficulties that had arisen, or doubts that had been felt, were brought forward to be resolved by the Commissioner, while the note of criticism was seldom absent. When the immediate business of the meeting came up for discussion it was sometimes found that the Committees of rural districts were unwilling to introduce a rationing scheme, on the ground that it was unnecessary in their case. There is no doubt but that this was very largely true with regard to bacon, ham, lard, and butter, for there were many country places where the supplies of these commodities were ample, and where the inhabitants were scarcely aware that there was a war in progress. On the other hand, other

Committees objected to imposing a rationing scheme on their people unless they were assured that supplies would be forthcoming to provide the rations they had fixed ; but after the Commissioner had pointed out that he was unable to control the actions of German U-boats, and that all that he could promise was that those places which adopted distribution schemes should receive their fair share of available supplies, the objection was allowed to fall to the ground.

National Rationing

The period of life of these schemes was not of long duration, for after the Ministry had introduced a meat card in April 1918, similar to that which they had previously put in operation in the London and Home Counties Divisions, it was decided to issue a national ration book on July 14th, containing leaves of coupons available for the purchase of sugar, "fats" and meat during thirteen weeks, with spare leaves which could be utilized for other foodstuffs should the Ministry, or a Food Committee, decide to add some other commodity to the list already mentioned. The book resembled so closely one that had been devised by the Southport Food Control Committee in connection with their local distribution scheme that it would appear to have been based upon it. It was printed in a variety of colours and was pleasing to the eye, but no tradesman would have admitted that it had any other virtue, for the coupons, which had to be cut from the leaves with a pair of scissors upon every purchase, were looked upon as an invention of the devil. The unfortunate butcher or grocer was under the necessity of keeping these small scraps of paper and returning them periodically to the Food Office, when, if a count of them revealed any serious discrepancies between the supplies he obtained and

those he distributed, he was liable to be called upon to furnish an explanation to the Executive Officer. Even half coupons were available for meat meals, and the lot of the restaurant or hotel proprietor would indeed have been hard had he been compelled to hoard every one of these ; but by a beneficent provision of what was known as "The Table of Equivalent Weights" he was able, by serving fowls and game, to obtain, without effort, more coupons than he really required. So long as the shortage of meat was stringent it was necessary that every individual's consumption of meat should be limited and steps taken to see that he should not obtain an additional quantity by getting one or more of his meals at a restaurant. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to have adapted the card used in local distribution schemes in such a way as to have made it available for the purchase of meat from the butcher, bacon and ham from the grocer, birds from the poulterer, and meat meals from the restaurant keeper. Yet the meat coupons had to serve these four purposes, and this, I believe, furnishes such justification or defence as the coupon system may be considered to need.

Tea

Before dealing with the rationing and distribution of meat and "fats," which were the foodstuffs besides sugar that were included in the ration book, reference may be made to tea, which was soon to be added to the list. The shortage of tea had become so acute that a scheme of control, known as the "90% Tea Control Scheme," was introduced on July 1st, 1917, under which 30 per cent. of the tea imported was to be retailed at a price not exceeding 2s. 4d. a lb., 35 per cent. at prices from 2s. 8d. to 3s., and 25 per cent. at prices from 3s. to 3s. 4d. The price of the remaining

10 per cent. was uncontrolled. The scheme may have had certain merits, and was almost certainly better than no control at all, but it had one striking demerit in the eyes of the consumer, and that was the difficulty he experienced under it of obtaining any other variety of tea except that which was highest in price, a difficulty that diminished but little when the uncontrolled 10 per cent. was brought within control and its retail price fixed at 4s. a lb.

The weakness of the scheme became accentuated as tea became scarcer, and it was consequently decided to take steps to purchase such Indian and Ceylon tea as was not required for export, to register tea retailers and their customers, and to distribute supplies in accordance with requirements. In the meantime a maximum retail price of 2s. 8d. a lb. was imposed, and Food Control Committees were advised to include tea amongst the foodstuffs to be rationed in their local distribution schemes. The national scheme came into operation on July 14th, 1918, and the weekly ration was fixed at 2ozs. per head. A few complaints were received as to the smallness of the ration, especially from those workers who were accustomed to take tea in fairly large quantities, but as the statistics showed that the normal consumption of tea in pre-war days was about 6½lbs. per head per annum of the population it will be seen that there was little justification for them. Generally, the public accepted the scheme with thankfulness, but the "grouse" from the trade was loud and long continued. Briefly, their grievance was this: Tea was divided into three grades or qualities. It was expressly prohibited to sell the lowest grade unblended. It was impossible to sell the highest grade without blending, because the fixing of a maximum retail price of 2s. 8d. a lb. prevented it from being a paying proposition. The grief of the con-

noisseur and of the expert, who was obliged to spoil a high-quality tea by adding some inferior quality to it, will probably be realised most acutely by the port drinker who should find himself compelled by some hard fate to dilute a vintage wine with the ruby-coloured liquid that is sold under the same name at a third-rate public-house.

CHAPTER IV

Meat

IT appears to me on looking back that, though the public had experienced meatless days and potatoless days, had waited in serried ranks for butter or margarine, and had been restricted to 8ozs. of sugar a week, it was not until the rationing of meat was introduced that they clearly realised how serious was the shortage of food and how grave was the position in which the continued sinkings of merchant vessels had placed the country. It was in November 1917 that Executive Officers sent to all butchers a simple form, known as M.C. 8, on which the latter were required to make a return of the quantity of meat sold by them during the four weeks ending October 27th. The object of the return was not stated, and was unknown. Some butchers seem to have imagined that the information was to be used for income tax purposes, and were careful not to overstate their sales : others returned the forms in blank with the observation—probably a correct one—that they kept no books or records. Meat apparently was plentiful, and people bought their Christmas dinners without any foreboding of what was in store for them. On January 7th, 1918, the thunderbolt fell. It took the shape of a lengthy telegram from the Ministry, in which it was announced that the supplies to retail butchers for the four weeks beginning on January 7th would be limited to 50 per cent of their October retail sales. The scene of consternation that followed was almost ludicrous. Householders commenced to calculate how they would manage with a fairly joint of half the usual dimensions, while the trade, when they had recovered from their stupefaction, hastened to explain that, by some oversight, they had omitted to

include in their returns certain quantities or amounts which should have been taken into account.

Retail Prices

But, celebrated or notorious as the form M.C. 8 became, it was not the commencement of the control of meat. When the newly-appointed Executive Officer took up his duties he found in operation the Meat (Sales) Order, 1917, and the Meat (Maximum Prices) Order, 1917. Of the former he took little notice, but the latter contained three clauses dealing with the retail prices of meat to which it was necessary for him to direct the attention of his Committee. The first clause laid down that no one should, in the fortnight ending September 15th, 1917, or in any succeeding fortnight, sell meat by retail except at such prices as would secure that the aggregate of the prices charged should not exceed the actual cost by more than 20 per cent., or 2½d. for every pound of meat sold, whichever should be the less. The second clause empowered a Food Control Committee to prescribe a scale or alternative scales of maximum retail prices for meat, while the third clause required every butcher to post a list of his prices in his shop.

Here was a pretty problem. Was the Committee to fix prices for meat, or to compel the butchers to furnish fortnightly accounts and to rely upon the clause which prohibited them from making more than a certain prescribed profit? If they decided in favour of the first alternative, two scales would certainly be necessary—one for home killed, and the other for imported meat. But that was only one part of the difficulty. How was the Committee to fix prices which would apply, without injustice, to the butcher who bought only the best animals and to the other whose meat was the product of old bulls or cows?

Or, again, how was the Committee to fix prices for, say, sirloin or shin beef, when it was well known that the up-town traders could sell more sirloin than a beast produced and had little sale for shin beef, while a directly contrary state of affairs existed amongst their brethren in the poorer quarters of the town? The adage that "meat was meat," whatever its quality, cut, or description, had not yet been exalted to the rank of an axiom, as it tended to be when the shortage was really severe, and at Barrow-in-Furness the Committee was impressed with the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of fixing a scale of prices that would meet the circumstances of all cases. Following the example of the Ministry in London, they had an experimental cutting up. By the courtesy of the Co-operative Society a side of beef of which the price and weight was known was cut up into joints, which were weighed and priced out. The result showed that the permitted percentage of profit was being exceeded, but to what extent and on what cuts were the prices to be reduced? The members of the Committee were not experts, but they were sufficiently businesslike to know that an all-round reduction of a halfpenny or a penny a pound would not meet the situation satisfactorily. They consequently decided to seek the advice of the trade itself. A small deputation of the butchers was accordingly summoned to meet the Meat Sub-Committee, and were presented with a schedule of cuts and asked to suggest prices to be charged for them. The schedule, having been drawn up in London, contained a number of cuts which were either unknown or only occasionally sold in the North of England. However, the deputation did its best with them and withdrew, leaving the Sub-Committee to its deliberations. The result of these was that it was decided to rely for the moment upon the fortnightly returns from the butchers,

and not to fix any scale of prices. Other Food Control Committees came to a different conclusion, and I do not wish to suggest that they did not act wisely. My object is merely to show the nature of the problems which Committees were called upon to solve and the energy and application which they brought to the task.

In the same month of November 1917 the Food Controller took a firmer grip of the meat trade and issued the Meat (Control) Order, 1917, which required live stock auctioneers and cattle dealers to hold licences issued by the Food Controller, and retail butchers and keepers of slaughter-houses to obtain certificates from their Local Food Control Committees.

Area Live Stock Commissioners

Next year the keepers of slaughter-houses were called upon to exchange their certificates for licences issued by the Area Live Stock Commissioner, whose department was responsible for the supply and distribution of meat. In the North-West Division there were two Live Stock Areas, known as Nos. 3 and 4, corresponding roughly with the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, and the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire respectively. I am afraid that at the outset, until our respective spheres of influence became defined in practice, this duality of control caused a little friction between the Divisional Commissioner's office and those of Captain H. Swetenham and Mr. T. Brown. The removal of such trivial ill-feeling as ever existed was expedited by the discovery that our hated rivals were, in fact, courteous individuals, who shared the same difficulties, partook of the same woes, and expressed the same emphatic opinions of some of the instructions issued by our common task-masters as we did. Though Mr. Brown's duties were no sinecure, they were not so onerous as those of Captain

Swetenham. Cumberland and Westmorland, over which Mr. Brown exercised jurisdiction, are pastoral counties with an adequate supply of cattle and a surplus of sheep. They were, and are, self-supporting, so far as meat is concerned, and the difficulty was not to find supplies, but to compel not only the consumer but the butchers to take their share of frozen meat, in order that other places less favourably situated might receive a portion of the quantity to which they were entitled in home-killed meat. Varied and ingenious were the arguments that were used in the attempts to evade this liability. On the face of it, it seemed absurd and a misuse of an overworked railway system to send frozen meat from Liverpool to Carlisle, where there were ample supplies of home-killed meat, in order that some of the latter might be sent to Lancashire towns ; but, on the other hand, it would have been unjust to have allowed the farming classes of the northern counties to have retained their cattle and to have fed the operative and the artisan wholly on frozen meat.

Another difficulty in the way of sending frozen meat to Cumberland and Westmorland arose from the fact that, owing to the scantiness of the population and the wide areas over which the villages were scattered, the meat had to be sent in parcels by passenger train and dropped off at wayside stations, where the butchers picked it up and took it on their rounds. Though we were aware that most of the country districts of Westmorland depended for their meat upon the butcher who came in his cart once or twice a week, it was something of a shock to learn that there was no butcher's shop in Appleby, the county town.

Again, it happened more than once that meat intended for some distant town, such as Whitehaven or Workington, was not transferred at the junction

from one railway system to the other, but was either left on the platform or overcarried, or, having been rather long on its journey, arrived in such a condition that it was condemned by the Sanitary Inspector. Every mischance of this nature that occurred was, of course, reported, with a petition appended that Cumberland and Westmorland people might live on Cumberland and Westmorland meat. Whether this petition was addressed to Mr. Brown, at Penrith, or to this office, the answer was invariably to the effect that the available supplies of home-killed meat must be equally distributed as far as possible, and that consequently it could not be granted. Foiled in their efforts to obtain their desires by entreaties, the butchers of one town announced their intention of refusing to accept the next consignment of frozen meat. Mr. Brown had a short conversation with the Divisional Commissioner on the telephone, and then notified the butchers concerned that if they declined to take the frozen meat they should not receive any of the home-killed variety. It was a decision taken—as many other decisions had to be taken—without consultation with the Ministry of Food in London, and it would probably have caused much murmuring and discontent had it become necessary to put it into operation. Fortunately, the threat was sufficient, the butchers gave way, and the situation was saved.

Cheshire, which formed part of Captain Swetenham's area, was also self-supporting, though not to the same extent as Cumberland and Westmorland; but Lancashire, with its network of industrial and mining towns joined together by tramways and marked by factory chimneys or slag heaps, was compelled to rely upon imports to feed its teeming population. The bulk of these imports came from Ireland, but a few cattle and some sheep came from Cumberland and

Westmorland, and were supplemented at times by supplies of sheep from North Wales, Yorkshire, and places still further afield.

Distribution of Supplies

The method of control and distribution of supplies to the butchers was necessarily a complex process, and is somewhat difficult to explain. At first, as has been mentioned, butchers' supplies were limited to 50 per cent of their sales in the month of October, 1917, and they had to distribute the diminished quantity amongst their customers according to their discretion. But later, when the machinery of rationing had become more perfect and consumers were registered with butchers and held ration books, permits were issued, known as live stock permits and dead meat permits, authorising butchers, or a group of butchers, to purchase the quantity of cattle or meat to which the numbers of their registered customers entitled them. This quantity varied, of course, from time to time, as the value of the meat coupon was raised or lowered, or as customers transferred from one butcher to another, or as canteens or new institutions, such as hospitals, were opened, but slight variations were as a rule disregarded unless and until a new registration was ordered.

Butchers' Committees

In nearly every town of any size the butchers formed a committee, or an association, and appointed one of their number to act as their buying agent to obtain their supplies. If they held a live stock permit, the agent was entitled to attend a market and present his permit to the auctioneer, who would sell him cattle or sheep up to the numbers shown upon his permit. At first this permit could be presented at any market,

but as this led to the invasion of distant markets by the buyers for large groups the permits were eventually tied to those markets in the neighbourhood of which the butchers carried on business. These markets were of two varieties, viz., local markets and distributing markets. The former met the requirements of the areas surrounding them, and any surplus was then sent to one or other of the three distributing markets at Preston, Salford, and Liverpool. Should any buyer have been unsuccessful in obtaining his full quota at the local market, he hied him to the distributing market to which his town or district was attached, and once more presented his permit for the balance. Should he still be unsuccessful in his quest, he notified the Area Meat Agent or such one of his deputies as was stationed in the district, who made arrangements to have cattle and sheep or dead meat sent from Birkenhead, the port at which the Irish supplies were received. Finally, if it turned out that this source had been exhausted, the deficiency was met by despatching frozen meat from the cold stores at Liverpool or Manchester.

If, however, the Committee held a dead meat permit their buyer presented it to a member of one of the three wholesalers' associations which were to be found at Manchester, Liverpool and Birkenhead, and which obtained supplies for their members in much the same way as did the holder of a live stock permit for a group of butchers.

At the same time that the arrangements set out above were being devised an Order was passed prohibiting the slaughter of cattle or sheep unless they had, within fourteen days immediately preceding the date of slaughter, been bought and sold in a market, while other regulations fixed the market to which the farmer or producer might alone send his stock. The

effect of this action was threefold. It prevented, or rather—for evasions of it were numerous and difficult to discover—it aimed at preventing, a farmer secretly selling to a butcher. Secondly, it made each local market the collecting centre for the district surrounding it. Thirdly, it put practically every cattle dealer in the kingdom out of business, so far as regarded his dealings in fat stock.

Grading of Cattle

When the stock came to market the sheep were valued and the cattle were graded. As the grading of cattle probably gave rise to more grumbling and complaints than any other single thing in connection with the control of meat, it is necessary that something should be said on the subject. The Order laid down that before a beast could be sold in a market it must be graded as belonging to one of four grades, which were fixed upon the percentage of meat the animal was likely to yield when killed. This process was to be carried out by a grading committee, consisting of a representative of the farmers, a representative of the butchers, and the auctioneer. In practice the representatives of the farmers and butchers generally graded without reference to the auctioneer, who was not always competent to give an opinion. But, in spite of the fact that the butchers had equal representation on the committee with the farmers, their protests were loud and vigorous whenever it turned out that their allocation had been graded too high, and that consequently they had paid too much for the cattle allotted to them. These protests naturally were louder and more vigorous still when surplus stock, which had been graded at a local market, reached a distributing market after having lost weight and condition on rail, and the butchers had either to take the

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cattle without being able to have them regraded or to go without supplies. Every effort was made to grapple with the problem, and some improvements were effected ; but, when all had been done and said, I doubt whether the decisions of a grading committee composed of archangels would have given satisfaction. Grading was within the province of the Live Stock Commissioner, and all complaints with reference to it were referred to him for investigation, but as the butchers were often supported by a Food Control Committee the Divisional Commissioner was frequently called upon to take notice of them. When this occurred he generally pointed out in his reply, firstly, that it was reasonable to suppose that the grading was in favour of the butchers at times and against the farmers, and that the former should consequently be prepared to take the rough with the smooth ; and, secondly, that the Area Meat Agent was willing to issue a dead meat permit in the place of a live stock one, which would effectually remove the cause of dissatisfaction. Regarded simply as a letter, this was undoubtedly diplomatic and sometimes effective, but it need not be pointed out that it omitted to deal with the grievance of which the butchers complained.

The Area Meat Distribution Committee

The work of distribution was dealt with by the Area Meat Agent, Mr. W. R. Brown, and his deputies, under the instructions and supervision of the Area Meat Distribution Committee, which met once or twice a week at Liverpool. This Committee consisted of various officials, of whom the Live Stock Commissioner and the Area Meat Agent were the chief, together with representatives of the Liverpool and Birkenhead Wholesale Meat Associations, the Birkenhead auctioneer, the importers of frozen meat,

the retail butchers, the writer on behalf of the Divisional Commissioner, and two persons nominated by the Divisional Commissioner to represent the general public or the consumers, with Mr. G. R. Belshaw as secretary. At its meetings reports were made as to the supplies available or likely to be available; the percentage of the permits and the proportions of home-killed and imported meat to be issued were fixed, general or particular instructions were given, shortages or surpluses were dealt with, and complaints were inquired into. The number and variety of the last-named lent interest to what would otherwise have been a somewhat dull affair.

Imported Meat

Imported meat provided a never-failing topic of discussion. At the outset of control the prejudice against frozen meat was very strong in certain localities, and everywhere the opposition to it was led by the butchers. The complaints as to its quality, and as to the condition in which it arrived at its destination, were innumerable. As often as not they had little substance in them. It is true that the R.A.S.C. had the right of first selection from stock for the requirements of the army—a right which no one who stayed at home could grudge them. It is also true that, after the armistice, meat was imported which had been held in stores in the exporting countries owing to the impossibility of shipping it, and was consequently somewhat stale. But if the period of extreme shortage that occurred during the early part of 1918 be excepted, when we obtained—and, in default of anything else to take its place, were glad to obtain—"box meat" from the United States, the imported meat was of fair quality and not infrequently better than much of the home-killed.

Still, the butchers would refrain from ordering it until all the markets had been held, in the hope that some surplus might appear which would enable them to do without it. As a natural consequence, when at long last they did ask for a consignment, it often reached them so late that they had not time to thaw it, and occasionally failed to arrive in time for the week end trade. As they knew very well that, owing to depleted rolling stock and other causes, delays in transport were habitual, they were not in a position to blame anyone but themselves: still, they never failed to try to put the responsibility on other shoulders.

Destruction of Food

These delays, especially in hot weather, sometimes led to deterioration in the quality of meat and its condemnation by the sanitary authorities, but it is right, I think, that the opportunity should be taken of stating here that the reports of the waste and destruction of large quantities of foodstuffs that appeared from time to time in the press were often gross exaggerations and, even when true, conveyed an imputation which no attempt was made to prove. That such and such a quantity of such and such a foodstuff had had to be condemned was no doubt regrettable, but as the destruction of foodstuffs had been going on before the Ministry of Food was created, and will undoubtedly continue now that it has come to an end, it is obvious that, unless the author of the paragraph was in a position to show that the quantity destroyed was abnormal, or that the necessity for its destruction could have been avoided by the exercise of care or forethought, he was not entitled to suggest, as he did, that the Ministry was to blame. It is, of course, possible that owing to the partial breakdown of the transport system, and owing, also, to the lack of cold

storage accommodation, which at times caused great inconvenience, larger quantities of perishable food were destroyed during the existence of the Ministry of Food than in the years before the war, but it should be remembered that if this is a fact—which is not certain, for I doubt whether complete statistics are in existence—it was largely due not to the incompetence or inefficiency of the Ministry or its servants, but to conditions which the war had set up, and which only the termination of the war could bring to an end.

Multiple Shops

Another topic which furnished matter for discussion at many meetings of the Committee was the allegation of the retailers' representatives that the multiple shop firms, like the British and Argentine and the Argenta, obtained better supplies of imported meat than the ordinary butcher. As imported meat was not distributed to these firms in the same way as it was to the ordinary retailers, it is possible that the allegation had some foundation in fact; but though sub-committees were appointed to investigate the matter and meetings of them were held at which representatives of the multiple firms were closely cross-examined, the charge was never made out to our satisfaction.

In the spring and summer, when there was an increased demand for mutton and lamb, well-founded complaints were received that the area did not receive its fair share of these varieties of meat, and the Committee, supporting them, made protests to the great ones of the Ministry in London, but received in return little but unsympathetic letters.

The Committee were also called upon to deal with such questions as the claim of the Jews, who were unable to accept imported meat, to additional cattle

to be killed in accordance with their religious rites, to appraise the alleged grievances of the slaughtermen when they struck or threatened to strike, to endeavour to convince each of the Wholesale Meat Associations that it was being treated better than the others, to close markets where malpractices were going on, and, generally, to hold the balance as evenly as possible between all sections of the trade.

Pigs and Pork

Though pork and veal can hardly be called staple foods, they came within the province of the Committee no less than beef and mutton, and, it may be added, caused that body much worry and trouble. The control of pigs by the Ministry was not one of its conspicuous successes. The main trouble probably arose from the fact that pigs were regarded from two points of view, namely, as potential pork when they were the object of the Meat Section's solicitous care, or as potential bacon, ham, and lard when another Department of the Ministry claimed jurisdiction over them. Various maximum wholesale prices were from time to time prescribed for pigs alive and dead, but those that prevailed and were paid were nearly always in excess of those that were fixed. Some little measure of success was achieved when it was required that pigs should only be sold in a market like cattle and sheep, but after that was abrogated the complete disregard for the maximum wholesale prices that was shown by the trade tended to bring the Ministry into contempt. A custom grew up, too, whereby pork butchers purchased pigs from other parts of the country and paid large commissions to the agents who supplied them, which they naturally recovered from the consumers, with the result that the maximum retail prices also became a dead letter. Though it was common know-

ledge that this was the case, it was far from easy to obtain any proof of it. For instance, a pig dealer or a pork butcher would buy a pig from a farmer at the controlled price, but would also purchase at the same time a very ordinary cockerel for the sum of £5! It was obviously impossible for a butcher who bought pigs under circumstances like these to sell pork to his customers at the maximum retail prices. Being impressed with this difficulty, I asked a butcher who had a large business in Liverpool what he would do if a person went into his shop and ordered some pork. His reply was "He wouldn't get any, unless I knew him very well!"

The failure of the Ministry's efforts to control the prices of pigs and pork illustrates the difficulty of attempting to regulate the action of the law of supply and demand. When the Ministry had complete control over the supplies of an article, as they had in the case of sugar and to a less extent in the case of beef and mutton, they could distribute them through the ordinary channels of trade and fix profits and prices, which wholesalers and retailers would be bound to observe or run the risk of being struck off the list of distributors, but when supplies were in private hands and were insufficient to meet the demands of the consumers the fixing of prices by Orders was powerless to prevent them from finding their true level. There was a decline in the number of pigs in this country owing to the difficulty of getting feeding stuffs at a reasonable price, while barley, which is the food that the ordinary cottager gives his pigs, was forbidden to be used for this purpose. Again, their export from Ireland was prohibited except under licence. On the other hand, there was a demand for pork and other pig products by consumers, which the butchers did their best to meet. The inevitable

result was that the little entrenchments built by the Food Controller were submerged by the tide of economic prices.

Calves and Veal

The regrettable fact in connection with calves was their wholesale slaughter in the year 1920, to which the Committee more than once called the attention of the Ministry. The census of live stock which was taken revealed the extraordinary fact that during the war this country had managed to maintain its stock of live stock at pre-war level. Though the number of sheep declined, owing no doubt to the compulsory increase of ploughed land, dairy cows and cattle actually increased. This increase was probably due to the prohibition of the killing of calves. When this was removed the holocaust began. When the farmer was getting high prices for the milk which he retailed he was unwilling to spare any of it for the rearing of calves, while the manufacturers were anxious to obtain calves to turn them into sausages and potted meat, and there was, in addition, the normal demand for veal for table use. As a result many thousands more calves were killed in 1920 than in the preceding year, as is clear from the following figures, which relate to the slaughterings at Liverpool alone:

1919		1920	
January 1 to		January 1 to	
June 14	11,939	June 12	15,746

The removal of restrictions on the distribution and prices of home-killed cattle and meat, and the abolition of registration for butcher's meat on July 4th, 1920, put an end to the work of the Committee and it ceased to exist. The abolition of control was received with mixed feelings by the trade. The pleasure at the

prospect of freedom was mingled with some regrets that a system which had enabled butchers to obtain supplies with a minimum of difficulty, and had fixed maximum retail prices which allowed a liberal profit, had at length come to an end. In saying farewell to the members of the Committee at their last meeting, the Area Meat Agent wished the members of it prosperity, but added that he was afraid that those of them who were in the meat trade could not reasonably expect to be as prosperous in the future as they had been under control!

Fish

When the supplies of any staple food became short everyone naturally turned to the nearest available substitute, with the result that the new demand for the substitute was almost immediately reflected in an increase in its price, until it became necessary for the Ministry to step in and control the substitute in its turn. So it happened that when meat became both scarce in quantity and poor in quality, and people began to purchase fish instead, every variety became more and more costly, and the Ministry was forced to intervene in order to protect the poorer class of consumers. The increase in prices which followed naturally on the increased demand for fish was further accentuated by a decrease in the supply, owing to many of the trawlers being taken over by the Admiralty and put on auxiliary naval duty, such as mine-sweeping and submarine hunting.

As usual, the Ministry dealt with the matter at first in a tentative way. The first of the Orders dealing with this subject merely authorized the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to relax the restrictions on fishing in tidal and territorial waters, while the second fixed the wholesale price of pickled herrings ! It

soon became clear, however, that the matter would have to be tackled thoroughly, and the first of the Orders fixing prices for fish was published in January 1918. Subsequently it was decided to regulate not only the prices, but the distribution of fish. An Order* was accordingly issued controlling the distribution of all fish except herrings, pilchards, mackerel, sprats, salmon, grilse, trout, freshwater fish and shell fish, at Aberdeen, Fleetwood, Grimsby, Hull, Milford Haven, and North Shields,† which were and are the chief fishing ports of the United Kingdom. Mr. W. R. Pope was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Fish for the North-West Division, and stationed at Fleetwood, where it was his duty to see that no person dealt in fish by wholesale who was not doing so at that port in 1917, that all fish brought into Fleetwood was sold in the open market, and that no dealer obtained more than his proportion of the trade done by him in 1917. In his turn the wholesale dealer was required to supply the retailers who dealt with him in the year 1917 with quantities proportionate to their purchases from him in that year, and to make regular returns of his sales and of the distribution of the supplies passing through his hands to the Assistant Commissioner. Lastly, the Assistant Commissioner was to make any necessary adjustments in supplies and prescribed quotas, to help the trade in obtaining such material as they required for carrying on their business and in securing the necessary transport facilities for distribution, and to assist in the enforcement of all Orders relating to fish. It will be seen that the system of control adopted was not very elaborate, but it was obviously impossible

* The Fish (Distribution) Order, 1918, dated 16th July, 1918.

† Lowestoft was added to the above list in November 1918.

to deal with fish on the same lines as margarine, or sugar, or to ration it. To begin with, it was not in universal and daily demand, while, in addition, it was extremely perishable, and supplies of it were constantly fluctuating. All that could be done, therefore, was to take precautions that the market was not cornered, that supplies were distributed more or less in accordance with requirements, and that exorbitant prices were not charged. It is, perhaps, open to doubt whether the Ministry's scheme did not allow too large a margin of profit to the trade : it is certain, at any rate, that the captains and crews of trawlers made large sums of money ; but, generally, it may be said to have accomplished the objects in view.

CHAPTER V

Margarine

IF the Great War had not been otherwise remarkable, it would at any rate have been notable for one result which it brought about, namely, the popularisation of the hitherto despised substitute for butter known as margarine. In pre-war days it had been the food of the poor, and if it ever entered the houses of the rich and well-to-do it probably never penetrated any further than the kitchen ; but when supplies of imported butter were largely cut off, and those of home-made butter—which were hopelessly inadequate to meet requirements—were diminished by the demand for milk and other circumstances, it became necessary for all ranks and classes of the community—except, perhaps, those in rural districts—either to go without supplies of fat altogether or to overcome their repugnance to margarine. That this choice was, in fact, no choice at all was proved by the size of the margarine queues, which were such a disquieting feature at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. The public simply *had* to eat margarine, and, having commenced to do so, speedily discovered that their objection to it had been largely based upon prejudice. In process of time the National Rationing system, which regarded neither riches nor poverty but dealt out food to duke or pauper with an impartial hand, came into being and made the consumption of margarine almost a national habit.

The diversion of shipping from commercial purposes to the carrying of troops and munitions not only interfered with the importation of butter, but also cut off those large supplies of margarine which we had been accustomed to obtain from Holland and Denmark. This naturally put a considerable strain

upon our native resources and, combined with the falling off in the supplies of butter—both imported and British made—resulted in a shortage, the acuteness of which was evidenced by the queues. In the days before the war the North-West Division would probably have been considered to be in a favourable position for the obtaining of supplies of margarine, for though the English Margarine Works at Broad Green, near Liverpool, and Planters Works at Bromborough, had been erected since August 1914, yet the Co-operative Wholesale Society were making it at Irlam, Calders at Liverpool, and Planters at Godley, near Hyde. The demand, however, was so great that the production of these three factories was totally inadequate to meet it, and the situation was only saved by the efforts of the Maypole Dairy Company, who enormously increased the output of their factory at Southall. In many places in this Division their shops were practically the only places where margarine was to be had, and it was in front of them, therefore, that the queues were nearly always found. The news of the arrival of a consignment of margarine at a railway station spread like wildfire, and long before the lorries conveying it could reach the shops hundreds of people had lined up before the doors. Long and anxious were the consultations held by Food Control Committees in their efforts to cope with this evil, but there was only one remedy, and that a partial one, for dealing with the situation.

Requisitioning

By the Food Control Committees (Requisitioning) Order, 1918, Committees were empowered to take stocks of foodstuffs from retailers under certain terms and conditions, and to distribute them amongst others. This power was utilized to the full by Executive

Officers, while they were hurrying forward those local rationing or distribution schemes which have been referred to above. Much disinterested and valuable service was given by the traders themselves in connection with this power to requisition. In the city of Liverpool they formed themselves into an advisory committee, which met once a week for the purpose of notifying the Executive Officer of the approximate quantity of the supplies that might be expected, the persons or firms to whom they were consigned, and the day and time of arrival. Generally, as has been said, the consignees were the branch shops of the Maypole Dairy Company, and the day was a Saturday. As the public came to know this eager crowds began to assemble at an early hour. Arrangements were made with the police authorities whereby the officer controlling the queue notified the Executive Officer by telephone of the arrival of the supplies. A staff of distributors was kept in readiness. On the receipt of the message they were promptly despatched by motor car, and on reaching the shop were, as a rule, lustily cheered by the good-humoured queue. The supplies were immediately broken up and redistributed amongst adjacent shopkeepers. The queue was then divided into a corresponding number of sections by the police, who headed them off in different directions, each section falling in behind the officer in a manner that would have delighted the heart of a drill sergeant.

Though people bore these hardships with much good humour, it has to be borne in mind that there was always a large section of the community who, owing to their being in factories all day long or otherwise occupied by their work, were unable to obtain any supplies at all, and whilst the British public were prepared to suffer restricted supplies cheerfully, provided the hardship was shared by everyone, they

objected to unequal distribution. In consequence, unrest began to manifest itself. Before this became serious, however, most Food Control Committees had introduced a scheme for the rationing of margarine. An improvement was noticeable at once, and the queue disappeared as distribution was equalized. How great the improvement was may be illustrated by quoting again from the experience of Liverpool. In the first week during which the local rationing scheme was in operation, though the total supplies of margarine were the same as those received in previous weeks, when they were believed to be so inadequate, at the close of the week there remained a surplus of fifty tons, which was available for the relief of other places from which shortages had been reported.

Increased Production

Though rationing could produce equality of distribution and prevent certain persons getting more than their proper share of a foodstuff, it was, after all, only a palliative, and did not abolish the shortage or add one ounce to the available supplies. The Ministry decided, therefore, to make arrangements to increase the production of margarine, as well as to regulate its distribution and to control its price.

Originally, margarine was made from animal fat and milk, but as the industry developed manufacturers came to rely more and more upon vegetable oils, which were extracted from the palm kernel, the ground nut, and other oil-bearing seeds and kernels, which had for the most part to be imported from abroad. In the early days of the war the supplies of oils and fats assumed a particular importance on account of the necessity of increasing the production of glycerine for the manufacture of high explosives, and their control was undertaken by the Ministry of Munitions ; but

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as the shortages of animal fats, such as butter and lard, became more pronounced, it became apparent that the greatest possible significance attached to vegetable oils and fats in regard to the problem of the provision of food, and control was transferred to the Ministry of Food. Steps were taken to increase the imports of oleaginous seeds, nuts, and kernels, and on their arrival they were taken possession of by the Food Controller, who handed them over to the crushers and the refiners, who, after having treated them in accordance with their trade processes, dealt with the residual oils according to the instructions they received. Necessary supplies of refined, bleached, and deodorised oils were delivered by them to the margarine manufacturers, who in turn were required to place at the disposal of the Food Controller the whole product of their factories. The prices of seeds, nuts, and kernels, of crude and refined oils, and the allowances made to the trade for their services and their profits were fixed, with the result that it became possible to fix a flat price for margarine, and the Ministry was then able to set up a Margarine Clearing House and introduce a detailed scheme for its distribution.

Distribution of Supplies

Though this scheme was somewhat complicated—and the average man may possibly consider that the methods adopted to provide him with his weekly ration of margarine at a moderate price are of little interest to him nowadays—it offers such an excellent example of the organization that had to be evolved and the work that had to be done when it was decided to exercise complete control over any foodstuff that it seems worth while to set it out here in some detail, if only in order to try to show that the officials of the Ministry did not draw their salaries without giving

something in return for them. With this object in view I am prepared to take the risk of boring the reader.

The local rationing or distribution schemes having placed Executive Officers in possession of information as to the requirements of their districts, retailers, caterers, and institutions were classified and dealt with on different lines, according to the quantities required by them. The classification was as follows :

(1) RETAILERS

Class A.—Those requiring over 2cwts. weekly.

„ B.—Those requiring from 28lbs. to 2cwts. weekly.

(2) CATERERS AND INSTITUTIONS

Class A.—Those requiring over 2cwts. weekly.

„ B.—Those requiring from 28lbs. to 2cwts. weekly.

„ C.—Those requiring less than 28lbs. weekly.*

Supplies were distributed to these various classes in accordance with the following rules :—

1. Class A purchasers were to buy direct from the Margarine Clearing House.
2. Class B purchasers were to buy from one registered wholesaler in their district.
3. Class C purchasers were to buy from one registered retailer.

All margarine was consigned to a district in bulk, and Food Control Committees were allowed to group adjoining districts to receive joint consignments at a convenient centre.

* It was originally decided that no retailer requiring less than 28lbs. weekly should be permitted to receive supplies, owing to the difficulty presented by the fact that a 28lb. box was the smallest package which was then made. This regulation, however, was soon withdrawn, on account of the hardship it imposed on small shopkeepers, and the matter was left to the discretion of Food Control Committees.

No wholesaler was permitted to supply any Class B customer outside his own district, unless the district where his customer carried on business had been grouped with his own under the scheme, or unless he had previously maintained regular facilities for delivery in that district, in which case he had to take delivery of the supplies in question at the station or depot to which the supplies of that district were consigned.

The Class B and C purchasers having nominated their suppliers, the total requirements of wholesalers were easily ascertained. A list was then prepared which gave the names and addresses of the Class A purchasers and of the wholesalers, together with their requirements. This list was sent to the Margarine Clearing House, which was a department composed of persons connected with the trade and officials of the Ministry, who were then in a position to send direct to Class A retailers and Class A caterers and institutions the correct quantities they were entitled to, and to wholesalers the supplies necessary to meet the requirements of the Class B retailers and Class B caterers and institutions who had nominated them as their suppliers. In order that there might be no mistake, a form was sent to each wholesaler showing the customers he was entitled to supply and the quantities he was authorized to send them.

The Responsible Officer

The arrangements made for delivering and invoicing devolved upon a person appointed by the Food Control Committee, and known as the Responsible Officer, whose duty it was to arrange for the receipt of consignments and their delivery to Class A purchasers, to supervise local distribution generally, and to invoice supplies. Wholesalers were required to make their

own arrangements for collecting their supplies from the railway station or depot.

Generally, it was the Executive Officer who performed the duties of Responsible Officer. Each week he received from the Margarine Clearing House a copy of the instructions sent to the manufacturers, so that he might know what supplies to expect. The manufacturer, when despatching, also sent to him a form, which was practically an "advice note" of the quantity sent. On the arrival of the goods the Responsible Officer checked them against the "advice note" and, if correct, signed the note and returned it to the manufacturer.

The Responsible Officer next made out the delivery orders to the various classes of consumers. These documents were in triplicate and comprised a delivery order, a receipt for the delivery order, and a copy of the receipt, and were used in the following way: In the case of wholesalers, who had to collect their supplies at their own expense, and of those Class A purchasers who preferred to collect their own supplies themselves, delivery orders were made out for their authorized quantities and forwarded to them with the receipt. The order enabled the wholesaler or the purchaser to collect his quota: the receipt was for his signature and return. In the case of the other purchasers, to whom the margarine was delivered at the cost of the Margarine Clearing House, the delivery orders were handed by them to the railway company as an authority to deliver. The receipts were collected and sent to the Margarine Clearing House with a weekly schedule of deliveries.

After the delivery orders had been issued, invoices were made out and despatched. Unless payment was made within seven days from the date of the invoice further supplies were withheld, and if the customer

was a wholesaler or a retailer the Responsible Officer made arrangements to transfer his customers to someone else.

The weekly schedule of deliveries, which is mentioned above, not only gave information as to the number and date of all invoices, the names of purchasers, the quantities supplied and the amounts to be paid, but gave particulars of any surpluses carried over from week to week, thus enabling the Margarine Clearing House to regulate supplies in accordance with requirements.

Distribution Officers

Such in outline was the machine for regulating the distribution of margarine. At the outset numerous difficulties presented themselves, and a staff of Distribution Officers was attached to Divisional Headquarters for the purpose of dealing with them. Some of these difficulties arose from circumstances that were beyond their control, such as the inadequacy and inefficiency of the railway transport system, which had been denuded of men and depleted of rolling stock by the necessities of the war. Faulty communications frequently held up a whole district's supplies, while the supplies of other districts sometimes went astray altogether. One fine morning the Responsible Officer of the town of Bootle, in Lancashire, found himself confronted with the impossible task of trying to meet the needs of a population of about 100,000 people with 1cwt. of margarine, while at the same time one of the Distribution Officers was hastily summoned to the rural district of Bootle, in Cumberland, where on one of the small stations on the Furness Line he found several tons of margarine dumped down in a hot sun and commencing to escape from its boxes. Accidents like this could not be foreseen and were

inseparable from the introduction of a new scheme of such magnitude, but owing to the efforts of the Distribution Officers difficulties were faced and gradually overcome and the complicated system made to work smoothly.

The first distribution of margarine by the Clearing House commenced on March 25th, 1918, and the ration was then 4ozs. of butter and margarine combined. The last distribution took place in the week ending March 1st, 1919, when the ration was 6ozs. After that date margarine was freed from control as regards quantity, and its distribution reverted to the trade.

Butter

It may be objected that, while margarine has been dealt with at considerable length, little or nothing has been said about butter. The answer is that there is little or nothing to say. The Ministry imported supplies of this commodity from abroad, and collected such quantities of British-made butter as they could, but the latter were only small, and the total distributed was quite inadequate to meet the demands of consumers. The maximum price of butter was low in comparison with the cost of its home production, but as it was considerably higher than that of its rival, margarine, there was frequently sufficient in the hands of retailers to allow them to give more than the fixed ration of butter to those who were prepared to pay for it out of the share of those who preferred to take the cheaper margarine.

In order to meet the needs of Jews and vegetarians, supplies of kosher margarine and nut butter were also distributed, and in the shortage of lard the wants of fish fryers, confectioners, and others were met by a distribution of edible oil, and oil and fat compound. Not

only were wholesale and retail maximum prices fixed for these substances, and for margarine and butter, but a standard of quality was set up for them, as well as for dripping and shredded suet, with which manufacturers had to comply.

Bacon, Ham, and Lard

Though lard was eventually brought into the general scheme which was drawn up for the distribution of "fats" and rationed like them, it was originally dealt with as part of a scheme whereby imported bacon, hams, and lard were distributed to the trade proportionately to their dealings in these articles in the year 1916. At first the retail prices of these foodstuffs varied in accordance with their actual cost to the retailers themselves, an average profit of 3d. per lb. being allowed in the case of bacon and ham, and 2d. per lb. in the case of lard; but when the Ministry had completed their arrangements for purchasing supplies from the United States maximum prices were fixed all the way through from the importer to the consumer. A debt of gratitude was undoubtedly due to Mr. Hoover for the efforts which he made to send bacon to this country, though I am bound to say that when it arrived here, owing to the difference in the cuts and to its being either salty or fat, or both, it was very little more popular, either with the trade or the consumer, than the "box meat" which had been received from the same country shortly before. Still, American bacon was better than no bacon at all in the opinion of most people, though I once stayed at an hotel where the manager unfortunately took a different view, and the breakfasts provided were of a most sketchy description in consequence. In the shortage of supplies of the home-cured article it occasionally happened that those retailers who had been

selling imported bacon in the year 1916 were more favourably situated than those who had not. The position was changed, however, and the distribution of bacon was put on a different basis when it was rationed and consumers were called upon to register with retailers. It then became possible to calculate the requirements of retailers with some degree of accuracy and to provide them with supplies in accordance with them. Unfortunately, though retailers were dealt with in this way, the same method was not adopted at the outset in the case of importers and wholesalers, who, when they were in possession of large quantities of bacon, sometimes tried to unload it on retailers, regardless of the fact that as it was rationed the latter could only dispose of limited quantities. The natural result ensued. Some of the bacon became tainted and went bad upon the hands of the retailers, especially as they did not possess the necessary machinery for "processing" it. Executive Officers in consequence received numerous applications for permits to sell it without coupon, which they had no alternative but to grant, though the frequent issuing of these permits had a bad effect upon rationing. When the retailers protested against this action of the wholesalers the latter threatened them with a refusal of supplies in the future. This was duly reported to Divisional Headquarters, whereupon Captain Caffrey, the Assistant Commissioner for Distribution, made a vigorous onslaught on the Bacon Section of the Ministry and threatened dire vengeance against any wicked wholesaler whom he should discover to be imposing upon innocent retailers. The Bacon Section retorted, in milder vein, that the retailers were not so guileless as they seemed, and alleged that, though it had been laid down that "bacon was bacon" quite regardless of cut and almost regardless of quality, certain retailers

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were trying to pick out of their consignments the cuts that they preferred and to decline the others, on the ground that they were in excess of the quantities they were entitled to receive. The conflict with the Bacon Section went on for some little time, but the department eventually gave way and wholesalers were given supplies on the same basis as retailers—that is to say, in accordance with their authorized demands.

Several other little skirmishes took place, with varying results, which it would not now be either profitable or interesting to record. These arose mainly from the fact that while it was the business of the Divisional Commissioner to see that rationing was carried out, the Supply Departments of the Ministry in London, who were obtaining stocks, were mainly concerned to see that they were put into consumption before they went bad, and to make such arrangements for distribution as would not bear too hardly upon importers and wholesalers. In view of possible emergencies, and in order to provide the supplementary ration which it was at one time in contemplation to grant to heavy workers, large orders for bacon were placed with America, and though it was hard cured in order to enable it to be kept as long as possible some of it got into a “forward” condition, which necessitated its being washed and smoked to make it palatable and fit for consumption. As to the quantity that went bad, there is no doubt that the rumours that were prevalent as to the wholesale destruction of bacon were grossly exaggerated, but the necessity of dealing with “forward” bacon and the claims in respect of it was recognized.

Bacon Claims Committee

A Claims Committee was consequently set up at Liverpool, consisting of importers, wholesalers and retailers, and presided over by Mr. J. E. Worrall, the

Assistant Commissioner for Bacon, which examined all claims made by importers and wholesalers in respect of bacon received by them and granted allowances or rebates to cover the cost of processing such consignments as were "forward." This was probably the best arrangement that could be made, but it was not entirely satisfactory, as a word or two of explanation will show.

Originally, retailers and wholesalers were at liberty to obtain supplies from the persons with whom they had dealt in 1916, but, in order to economize transport, England and Wales were later divided into two areas, roughly representing the north and the south, and traders were only permitted to purchase bacon, hams, and lard from suppliers who carried on business within the same area as themselves. Thus a retailer in Preston might only order from a primary or secondary wholesaler in the northern area, and wholesalers in that area were prohibited from supplying customers in the south. Now, the people of the south have many failings and peculiarities, as the people of the north will readily admit, and amongst them is a strange and unaccountable preference for lean ham instead of fat ham, and smoked bacon instead of unsmoked. Thus it happened that wholesalers in the south found a ready market for the bacon which they had processed, but those of the north were handicapped by the superior taste of the people of their area, and had some difficulty at times in disposing of the bacon which they had been under the necessity of smoking.

In 1919 the Ministry began to allow bacon to be imported on private account, though they continued to distribute supplies from their own stocks. The trade was at liberty to purchase bacon from foreign sources on the best terms they could make, but when bacon reached the retailers, whether it was Government

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bacon or "free" bacon, it had to be sold at the maximum prices fixed by the Order then in force. It soon became evident that the trade was not able to buy bacon at as low a price as that at which it was issued by the Government, and retailers began to complain that they were not receiving an adequate profit. Whether it was that the "free" bacon was of higher quality and there was a larger demand for it, or whether it was that the general demand for bacon was increasing and the "free" bacon was required to cope with it, I do not know, but the situation was chiefly interesting to us as showing the advantage there was in controlling at every stage of distribution, and the difficulties that appeared when this was not done. This point was emphasized by the spokesmen at the annual meeting of the National Federation of Grocers, held at Liverpool, but Mr. G. H. Roberts, who was the Food Controller at the time, declined to reimpose that complete control which the retailers would have preferred, though he raised the maximum retail price by 2d. a pound.

CHAPTER VI

Milk

IT may safely be said that the foodstuff that was responsible for more argument and more dissension than any other was milk. The Milk (Prices) Order, 1917, which was the first of a series of Orders dealing with this subject, fixed maximum retail prices for rural districts of 2s. a gallon for the month of October, and 2s. 4d. a gallon for the ensuing months until the end of March, with corresponding prices of 2s. 4d. and 2s. 8d. for urban districts and towns, but authorized Food Control Committees to vary these prices if they thought fit. The instructions which accompanied the Order suggested that the maximum prices above mentioned were too high for most districts, and that Committees should proceed to discuss the matter with representatives of the trade with a view to fixing lower ones. Most Committees did not stand in need of a hint like that. They were astonished to find that a maximum retail price should be fixed that was practically double that which had prevailed one short year ago, and were disposed to regard persons with milk rounds as a new species of criminal which had been thrown up by the war. On the other hand, they realized that there was a scarcity of milk, and that if they fixed a price that was too low there was some danger of its being sent to some other locality where the Food Control Committee was willing to agree to a higher price. Moreover, as soon as they began to make inquiries they found that the problem bristled with difficulties. Take, for example, Barrow-in-Furness, with whose circumstances and conditions I became fairly familiar. This was a town of some 80,000 inhabitants, situated at the south end of a peninsula much like a toe at the end of a stocking. Placed as it was, it was clear that as there were no surrounding

agricultural districts from which it could draw supplies it must rely for the larger part of its requirements upon rail-borne milk. As a matter of fact, when inquiries were made it was found that something like 80 per cent. of the milk sold in Barrow-in-Furness was brought in by train or road, that the "accommodation" milk, which furnished the additional quantity required for the milk pudding which formed part of the Sunday dinner, came from as far away as Scotland, and that though milk was brought on to the Furness Railway system in considerable quantities, not a drop was carried off it. The milk retailers of Barrow-in-Furness, therefore, were, with few exceptions, not producer-retailers, but persons who picked up their supplies at the railway station. It was consequently necessary to take as the standard price not that which would sufficiently remunerate the small dairy farmer or milk producer, who lived a short distance from the town and kitted his milk in its streets every morning and evening, but one which would pay the retailer, who had to buy milk from a distance, pay carriage on it, and run the risk of some portion of it going sour before it was sold. Such considerations as these had a sobering effect even upon the Labour representatives on the Committee, who were naturally most anxious to keep down prices, and after deputations from the farmers and the milk retailers had each been heard twice it was possible to come to a decision as to the retail price to be fixed. Though this decision was unanimous, it failed to meet with the approval of certain sections of the community, who paid 10*d.* a pint for beer with fewer complaints than they paid 7*d.* a quart for milk.

Towns Dependent on Rail-borne Milk.

Barrow-in-Furness, of course, was a somewhat exceptional place owing to its geographical position,

but the following towns or districts were also largely dependent on rail-borne milk for their supplies :

MANCHESTER AREA

Manchester	Droylsden
Oldham	Audenshaw
Prestwich	Barton-upon-Irwell
Pendlebury	Urmston
Salford	Stretford
Failsworth	Irlam
Eccles	

LIVERPOOL AREA

Liverpool	Litherland
Bootle	Sefton Rural
Great Crosby	Waterloo-with-Seaforth
Little Crosby	

MISCELLANEOUS

Bolton	Wigan
St. Helens	Birkenhead
Widnes	Wallasey

It is scarcely necessary to point out that the reason why the Manchester area and the miscellaneous towns had to draw milk from a distance was that they were intensely industrial in character. Round about Manchester the area is so thickly populated that in certain places it is possible to walk for miles without seeing a green field, while in others the smoke and fumes from the numerous chimneys which are the predominating feature of the landscape injuriously affect the herbage, so that the keeping of milch cattle is both a difficult and an uneconomic proposition.

Exceptional Position of Liverpool

The dependence of the Liverpool area upon foreign milk was due to circumstances which somewhat resembled those existing at Barrow-in-Furness. The city is situated in the extreme south-west corner of

Lancashire, and was cut off from the milk producing county of Cheshire by the broad stream of the Mersey until a bridge was built at Runcorn. On the other hand, in the rural district to the north of it, which has Ormskirk as its centre, the farmers have long devoted their attention to the growing of potatoes and other root crops, and it is not until one approaches Preston that the arable nature of the farming gives place to the pastoral. To meet this condition of affairs an expedient was adopted which was unique in the North-West Division, though I believe that the somewhat similar position of Edinburgh upon the Forth has been responsible for its reproduction there. This was the keeping of some 4,500 stall-fed cattle, which were tied up by the neck from the day they entered the shippin or cowhouse until their period of lactation was over, when they were sold to the butcher. It is estimated that about 20 per cent. of the requirements of the city were met from this artificial source.

Retail Prices of Milk

Of course, the degree of dependence upon rail-borne milk varied considerably in the towns and districts above mentioned, but even in those places where the quantity of locally produced milk was relatively large the retail price had to be regulated by the cost of the additional quantity that was necessary to make the total supply adequate for the requirements of the inhabitants.

If the retail price in any locality was fixed at too low a figure it was evident that farmers might decline to supply or retailers be forced out of business. There was not much risk of this where the supply was provided wholly by producer-retailers from the surrounding neighbourhood, for being as a rule merely milk producers and not farmers they were unable to find

another market or to make any use of their milk if they withheld it. Still, as several Committees found, it was not wise to place too much reliance on this. Where, however, the supply was sent into a town by farmers from a distance and consigned either to wholesalers or to retailers there was a danger that the farmers would try to sell it to purchasers who were able to give a higher price for it, or turn it into cheese or butter. In order to prevent producers acting in this way makers of condensed milk and other persons who used milk for manufacturing purposes were forbidden to acquire more milk than they were getting on a certain date in 1916 or 1917, and Food Control Committees were empowered, with the consent of the Food Controller, to require or direct any producer who was diverting or withholding milk to hold at the disposal of the Committee such quantities of milk as the latter might determine. This power of "requisitioning" was extremely useful, and, as extended by subsequent Orders, enabled Committees to deal with recalcitrant producers by taking over supplies and making arrangements for their sale and distribution.

Milk Schemes

In most cases the mere threat of this action was sufficient, but "milk schemes" were actually produced and put into operation by some dozen or more Committees, amongst which were those of Bury, Rochdale, Chorley, Horwich, Ramsbottom, Maryport, and Bredbury and Romiley. The milk was taken over from the producers, depots were set up, utensils purchased, and a house-to-house distribution made at the retail price rejected by the retailers. The trading generally showed a profit, and, after a short period of jealous watching, the retailers gave in and agreed to

resume distribution at the same retail price as that charged by the Committee. In one case only (that of Bredbury and Romiley) did the struggle last over a protracted period, namely, from November 1917, to October 1919, and it also resulted in the capitulation of the producer-retailers.

In some instances, however, the Divisional Commissioner was of the opinion that the prices fixed by Committees were too low—in that they did not allow a sufficient margin of profit, or that they were liable to cause dissatisfaction because they were less than those of an adjoining and similar district. He was consequently unable to recommend the Food Controller to give his approval to them, which gave great offence to the Committees concerned, who were often only persuaded with difficulty to reconsider their decisions.

This question of prices was a constant source of irritation and a continuous spring of bitter feeling. While the general body of consumers, including many who were competent to pass an opinion, held that the maximum prices fixed by the Food Controller were too high and that farmers were “profiteering,” the agricultural class of the community was always complaining that they were too low. In an attempt to find a solution of the problem a travelling commission was appointed to take evidence and make recommendations. In the course of its wanderings it arrived at Preston and examined a number of witnesses, but as most farmers kept no books of any description, while the few who did did not treat their production and sale of milk as a separate account but included it in the general accounts of their farms, the evidence was not of great value, and at its highest only made the process of guessing a little less hazardous than it was before

Though milk retailers and wholesalers were registered, no general scheme for the rationing of milk was introduced owing to the difficulties involved by its perishable nature, by the fluctuations in its supply due to weather conditions, by the variations in its customary consumption, and other circumstances, but the Ministry directed its energies to trying to effect an equitable distribution of the available supplies and to endeavouring to mitigate the shortage of them by distributing quantities of condensed milk

Milk Priority Schemes

Foremost amongst the expedients designed to regulate consumption was the authorization of Priority Schemes, under which Food Control Committees could direct retailers to provide milk to certain persons, such as young children and invalids, in priority to their other customers. The quantities these classes were thus entitled to receive were limited in amount, but in the case of a shortage of supplies the retailer was obliged to serve them before meeting the requirements of his other customers

Again, in order to limit the consumption in catering establishments, the serving of milk as a separate beverage was prohibited, except in the case of children under ten years of age, and the use of milk for other purposes was limited to a small quantity at each meal.

Cream

Lastly, cream was forbidden to be used except for purposes : Firstly, the making of butter ; secondly, the consumption by young children, who were allowed half a pint a week, and by invalids, who could only obtain it on a medical certificate and as a substitute for butter and margarine.

Condensed Milk

Before distributing supplies of condensed milk to alleviate the shortage of fluid milk the Ministry obtained certain statistics with regard to its use in different parts of the country. These revealed some curious diversities. London, the Home Counties, South Wales, and Northumberland and Durham were, in that order, the places where it was most in demand ; while the North-West Division, with a consumption of seven tins per head of the population, occupied a middle position in the table, which the Metropolis headed with a figure of sixteen. Larger supplies were issued to the trade, and a further quantity which was placed at the disposal of the Divisional Commissioner enabled him to furnish immediate assistance to those districts where shortages of fluid milk were most acute. In the seasonal shortages of milk the Ministry endeavoured to see that the fullest possible use was made of the limited supplies in their natural condition. On the other hand, when the " flush " of milk came on their main concern was that the surplus should be utilised to the best possible advantage from the food standpoint. The three chief articles which are manufactured from fluid milk are butter, cheese, and condensed or dried milk. Butter was in disgrace! Not only was it a " luxury food " which only the well-to-do could afford to buy, but as it retained only about half the food contents of the milk it was also uneconomical, unless full use was made of the skim milk. The Ministry fixed such a low maximum retail price for it that its production was unprofitable, and they did not trouble to conceal their intention to discourage its manufacture, in order that surplus milk might be used either for the making of condensed or dried milk, which could be held in reserve for the winter when liquid milk was scarce, or turned into cheese,

which was a very valuable and much sought after food.

Cheese

It was about the middle of the year 1918 that the Ministry introduced schemes for the control and distribution of Caerphilly cheese, and of all other British-made cheese, except Wensleydale and Stilton, soft cheese, and cheeses of less than 2lbs. in weight. All producers who made more than 56lbs. a week during the season were required to send their cheese to a factor, who distributed it to wholesalers, who in turn passed it on to retailers on the basis of their sales in the year 1916. When the cheese was received by the factor it was graded by him and paid for according to its keeping qualities. This standard of value was far from pleasing the Lancashire farmers, who prided themselves upon the manufacture of a rich, crumbling, full-cream cheese that came to its maturity in about six weeks ; and I remember attending, as an uninvited guest, an indignation meeting that was held at Preston at which resolutions of protest were passed against it, as well as against the power of grading that was given to the factors.

The maximum retail price of cheese generally was 1s. 8d. per lb., which was less than that which was paid by the Ministry to the makers of it, so that trading in this article would not have been a paying proposition if they had not pooled with their supplies of British-made cheese their purchases of the imported article and sent them all out at the same prices.

Cheese was not included in the national rationing scheme, but—as has already been said—retailers received supplies on the basis of their 1916 sales and were allowed to dispose of it to their customers at their discretion. The reason was that cheese was a com-

modity that did not lend itself readily to rationing, as the demand for it varied in different localities and it was chiefly consumed either in industrial areas or by outdoor workers. On the whole the system worked well, and there were few or no complaints. Still, the shortage was felt acutely in a cheese eating county like Lancashire, and there was a keen demand for the supplementary quantities that were from time to time placed at the disposal of the Divisional Commissioner to be distributed by him according to his discretion.

Flour and Bread

In dealing with flour and bread the Government adopted a policy which was fiercely attacked and as strenuously defended. In order to keep down the price of these commodities part of the cost of flour was met by a subsidy from the taxes. It was argued that by acting in this way the State was pandering to the proletariat, was defying economic laws, was relieving employers from paying adequate wages, and so on and so forth. On the other hand, it was contended that bread was a universal food, that to allow it to find its market price would be to inflict a hardship on the poorest of the poor, that the rise in wages had not kept pace with that of food, and that it was an emergency measure due to the war and not to be regarded as a precedent. No doubt there was much to be said for both views, but this at any rate may be pointed out: that the Ministry at a later period resisted the demand of the Trade Union Congress for the granting of a similar subsidy in the case of meat. However, the merits of the question were no concern of officials, whose duty it was to carry out the instructions of the Ministry and not to discuss its policy.

Having decided to control flour and bread, the Ministry set up the Royal Commission on the Wheat

Supply, which made purchases of wheat, and the Flour Mills Control Committee, which regulated the production and distribution of flour, fixed the percentages of extraction to be allowed, issued licences to factors and dealers, and did various other important things that were no business of Food Control Committees. The interest of the latter was chiefly confined to registering bakers and confectioners and persons who sold flour, to seeing that the maximum prices were observed, that imported white flour was not improperly acquired or used, and that bread was made in accordance with the provisions of the Bread Order.

Medical Certificates

Few persons who ate it will have forgotten the dark and somewhat heavy substance which was sold as bread during the war. Though its appearance did not excite one's appetite, it was not nearly so unpalatable as it looked, and we had little sympathy with those persons who fled to their doctors and obtained certificates that they were suffering from some ailment or other which necessitated their being allowed to buy white flour. In this connection I may say that after some experience we lost the simple, childlike faith that we once had in these documents. No doubt the members of the medical profession were often placed in a difficult position by nervous or selfish patients, and no doubt, also, they were of the opinion that white flour, or cream, or additional supplies of sugar, would have a beneficial effect upon their patient's health, especially if the patient was convinced of it, but we could not help thinking that at times they did not fully appreciate the difference between what was necessary and what was desirable.

In order to discourage the consumption of bread, the sale of new bread, or of any bread which contained

dried fruit, eggs, fat, or sugar, or was made with the addition of milk, was prohibited, and no person was allowed to be served with more than a total of $1\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. of bread, cake, bun, scone, or biscuit in any place of refreshment open to the general public at any meal which began between the hours of 3 p.m. and 5-30 p.m.

Potatoes in Bread

Again, with the object of conserving stocks of flour as far as possible the Ministry made great efforts to induce the bakers to add potatoes or potato flour to the dough. Probably most good housewives have made use of this device some time or other, but though the scheme was strongly pushed the trade as a whole could not be induced to adopt it. Potato mashing plants were set up at Liverpool and Stretford, but there was only a small demand for their product. Eventually the appearance of considerable quantities of farina on the market provided the bakers with a handy substitute and abolished what little chance of success the scheme ever had.

Until the subsidy was reduced the maximum price of bread was fixed at $2\frac{1}{4}d.$ per lb., with a provision that a 1lb. loaf might be sold at $2\frac{1}{2}d.$, if the vendor was able and willing to sell a 2lb. or 4lb. loaf to the customer at the prescribed rate of $2\frac{1}{4}d.$ per lb. By this device what came to be known as the problem of "the broken halfpenny" was circumvented.

The Broken Halfpenny Problem

This problem appeared from time to time, and was the cause of some little trouble when a maximum price included a fraction of a penny which was less than a halfpenny. The retailer naturally objected to forego this fraction, which, on a number of transactions, amounted to an appreciable sum ; but if he

charged the purchaser the full halfpenny he rendered himself liable to prosecution for exceeding the maximum price. Several Food Control Committees endeavoured to meet the case by importing a supply of farthings, but this was far from satisfactory, for it was found that after they had once been put into circulation they never reappeared, being apparently hoarded or retained as curiosities. The difficulty was got over in the case of milk by averaging the price over the summer or the winter months, but it kept recurring in the case of other foodstuffs, until the Ministry took to inserting a clause in the Orders issued by them authorising prices to be increased to the nearest halfpenny or penny as the case might be.

Licences for Higher Bread Prices

While the maximum price was thus fixed, the Order provided that where a Food Control Committee was satisfied that, by reason of some exceptional circumstances, bread could not be sold by retail at the maximum price so as to secure a reasonable profit the Committee might issue a provisional licence authorising its sale at higher prices, subject to its being cancelled or modified if required by the Food Controller. In the whole of the four counties that constituted the North-West Division there were only six places in which such a licence was issued, viz. : Blackpool, St. Annes-on-the-Sea, the Fylde, Morecambe, Heysham, and Keswick.*

The case of Keswick is capable of a simple explanation. In that delightful corner of the Lake District

* This is not strictly accurate, for provisional licences were also issued at Chester, Southport, and Alsager, but these were only temporary in character and had relation to the threatened national strike of operative bakers in July 1919.

there were confectioners who baked and sold bread, but no persons who made bread on a large scale or confined their attention solely to its manufacture. This source of supply was not sufficient even to meet the requirements of the inhabitants in the winter, and when visitors arrived in large numbers in the summer it became necessary to import bread daily from Carlisle by passenger train and to pay carriage on it.

The other five places might really be reduced to two, for Heysham and Morecambe adjoined one another and drew from the same sources of supply, while St. Annes-on-the-Sea and the Fylde were dependencies of Blackpool. They had this in common with Keswick, that they were health resorts, but differed from it in that the bread consumed in them was mainly supplied by large bakeries and sold to the public by grocers and other retailers. The question of the granting of provisional licences at Blackpool was a bone of contention during practically the whole period of control. The bakers claimed that owing to the fact that in the season they had to provide for a population that was two or three times its normal size they had to maintain large bakeries, and consequently were subject to heavier establishment charges than persons in the same line of business in inland towns. On the other hand, the local Co-operative Society expressed itself as being contented with the maximum price, while it was pointed out that the firms who stated that they were unable to sell bread profitably in Blackpool at the maximum price were selling it at this price in the adjoining country districts without demur, though they had to take it there in their own motor vans.

Unfortunately the Order did not fix a "maximum wholesale" and a "maximum retail" price, but

merely a "maximum" price. The bakers, consequently, were able, if they wished, to charge the whole of this to the retailers, merely allowing them a small discount for selling. What precise allowance was made to the retailers I do not remember, but it was certainly not large and the retailers were probably not far wrong in saying that when they sold bread they were simply "changing a shilling." Both the local Food Control Committee and the Divisional Commissioner were waited upon by deputations and bombarded with letters. Assistant Commissioners attended conferences of the Committee, the members of which were nearly equally divided as to the necessity of an increase of price. Three separate investigations into the accounts of the bakers were made by officials from the Costings Section of the Ministry in London, who furnished reports which possibly had their value but did not give us that clear guidance we had hoped to receive from them. Provisional licences were issued, modified, withdrawn and re-issued, but the net result was that except for short intervals the price of bread in Blackpool was generally above the maximum.

Bread Prices After Decontrol

When the controlled price for bread was abolished steps were taken to obtain returns from every district in the Division of the average retail prices that were charged for flour and bread. These showed that the average price throughout the Division was about 1s. 4½d. for the quartern loaf, or rather for two loaves of 2lbs. each, for the quartern loaf is a rarity and is seldom seen in this part of the country. They also revealed the curious fact that while Co-operative Societies generally charged less for bread than other retailers, they not infrequently charged more for flour

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than their trade competitors. As we expected, the highest price, namely, 1s. 8d., was found at Keswick, but the comparatively high price of 1s. 6d. prevailed at Blackpool, St. Annes-on-the-Sea, Southport, Morecambe, Ormskirk, Blackburn, Colne, Nelson, Burnley, Clitheroe, Alston-with-Garrigill, Wigton, and Workington. That bread should be dear in a little out-of-the-way place like Alston-with-Garrigill, where the cost of the carriage of flour would be a serious item, was not unreasonable, but why the bakers at Manchester should have been content with 1s. 3d. while those at Liverpool demanded 1s. 4d., and why the price in Preston, where there are no flour mills, should have been only 1s. 4d. while consumers at Blackburn, where there are several large milling concerns, were called upon to pay 1s. 6d., were, to quote Lord Dundreary, "things no fellow could understand"! Inquiries were made into all these cases in which the price of 1s. 6d. was charged, but the result of them was hardly satisfactory. When we had eliminated the fact that in some cases retailers were charging more for the work of sale or distribution we were generally met with the claim that the bread was of a better quality than that sold in the localities where a less price was charged. It was stated that milk, malt extract, fat, or special salt was added, while it was alleged that where the loaf was cheap the bread was "waterlogged." Though we had no reason to doubt the truth of the first assertion, we remained sceptical as to whether the added substances justified the increased price demanded. The latter allegation we considered to be merely spiteful. However, as control had gone, we were powerless to take any steps to reduce prices, and could only advise those persons who complained to invoke the assistance of the local Profiteering Committee.

Restrictions on Cereals

Not only were wheaten flour and bread thus controlled, but restrictions were imposed upon the sale, use, and price of wheat itself and other cereals. These varied from time to time, but their general effect was to prohibit wheat, rye, barley, and dredge corn (which was a mixture of wheat and some other cereal, resulting from the latter having been sown where there had been a partial failure of the wheat crop) being used except as seed, or for the manufacture of human food unless they were unfit for either of those purposes. Similarly, the use of rice, rice flour, oatmeal, maize flour, semolina, and other oat and maize products except as human food was forbidden.

Control of Feeding Stuffs

It will be seen that the only home-grown cereal that remained free from control as to use was oats.* This naturally bore very hardly upon the farmer, who was hard put to to find feeding stuffs and was called upon to pay high prices for oil cake, as well as upon the poultry keeper, who had difficulty in getting the wherewithal to feed his hens. However, there was no help for it. In the case of a shortage of grain and cereals there could be no argument as to whether men and women or cattle and fowls should have the first call upon such stocks as there were. This difficulty of obtaining feeding stuffs was a very real one. It was one of the main causes of the increased prices of meat, milk, and eggs, and became so acute that it was found necessary to set up a special department under the Live Stock Commissioner in order to deal with their rationing and distribution. It also led, no doubt, to infractions of the Order restricting the use

* The use of these was restricted in 1917, but the restriction was removed in the following year.

of cereals. This Order required that anyone who wished to sell more than 10cwts. of damaged or unfit grain must obtain a certificate authorising him to do so, and that anyone who desired to use such grain for feeding animals must procure a licence for that purpose.

Grain Officers

The issuing or granting of these certificates and licences was entrusted to the Assistant Commissioner for Grain, who was attached to Divisional Headquarters, and to his assistants, who were known as Grain Officers, and who attended markets, took samples, made inspections, etc. Still, the difficulty of detection was so great that no staff, however efficient, could prevent farmers from using their own grain for unlawful purposes, while the demand for "damaged" wheat was so keen that not a few persons were found who were willing to buy and sell it at higher prices than those fixed for sound wheat, or to deal in "seed" wheat, regardless of the question as to whether the purchaser was likely to make use of it for the professed purpose. These stringent regulations came into force on August 15th, 1918. Fortunately the armistice was signed within three months, and it then became possible to gradually relax them and to disband the staff which had been collected to administer them.

CHAPTER VII

Potatoes

THOUGH maximum prices were fixed for swedes, for dried beans, peas and lentils, for both British and imported onions, and marrows had an Order all to themselves, vegetables generally were not controlled either in price or in distribution.* To this rule there was one exception, but it was so notable that it transcended the rule in importance. For that exception was potatoes, whose merits we had never fully appreciated until we were condemned to do without them on certain days in the week. This shortage, which occurred in the year 1917, determined the Ministry to take steps to encourage the production of potatoes, to provide for their distribution throughout the season at such a rate as would prevent waste on the one hand, and secure, on the other hand, that there should be no shortage towards the end of it, and to control the stocks of immune varieties of seed potatoes. The production of eating (or "ware") potatoes was encouraged at first by fixing not only a maximum but a minimum price per ton at which potatoes might be sold by the grower of them, thus guaranteeing that he should not receive less than a certain fixed price for his potatoes, and counteracting any tendency to a fall in prices that might result from increased production. To put it in other words, the wholesaler, the retailer, and the consumer were not to be allowed

* Except in the railway strike of 1919, when a temporary Order was issued, called the Vegetables (Prices) Emergency Order, 1919. In March 1919 the principal firms engaged in the tomato trade concurred in arrangements whereby tomatoes could be sold by retail at a price not exceeding 1s. 6d. per lb., but these arrangements were of a voluntary nature and the retail price was not fixed by order.

to pay less for the potatoes they bought or consumed because they had become comparatively plentiful, but the last-named person, upon whom, of course, the cost of the scheme finally fell, was taxed in order that farmers might be induced to increase the acreage devoted to this crop.

Later, this scheme was replaced by another, under which the cost of the "subsidy" was borne by the Government and the burden transferred from the consumer to the taxpayer. Briefly, the new scheme may be said to have abolished the minimum price and yet to have retained it. While it was no longer necessary for purchasers to pay growers a minimum price whatever the state of the market might be, the Government undertook to make up the difference between the average price realised by growers on the sales of lots of four tons or more during a specified period and a guaranteed price. This provision was subject to one important reservation, namely, a "base price" was fixed which growers were at liberty to sell beneath if they wished, but any such sale was considered to have taken place at the "base price" for the purpose of computing the amount to be refunded to the grower. To take an example. When the Government guaranteed the grower £6 a ton they fixed a "base price" of £5 a ton for potatoes grown in England and Wales. Consequently, if a grower sold his crop at £4 15s. a ton he was only entitled to claim £1 a ton from the Government, and not £1 5s. Periodically, growers sent in claims to their Food Control Committees supported by evidence of the sales made by them, which were checked by the Committees and then forwarded to the Divisional Commissioner for payment.

In the month of November 1918 this scheme was in its turn abolished and potatoes of the 1918 crop were

dealt with in another way. A small commission, presided over by Mr. (now Mr. Justice) Rigby Swift, had been appointed for the purpose of fixing the prices to be paid to growers of one acre or more of potatoes in England and Wales other than those sold as seed, and after visiting each of the fifteen districts into which the country had been divided and hearing evidence they recommended such prices as they considered would, having regard to the average cost of production and yield per acre in the different districts, give a fair profit to the grower. These prices were on a sliding scale, and were increased periodically from November to May, in order to offer an inducement to growers to retain their stocks and thus prevent a shortage in the months preceding the gathering of the new crop. These recommendations were adopted and included in the provisions of the Potatoes (Consolidation) Order, 1918, which also included an entirely new method of regulating distribution. Previously little had been done in this direction. The export of potatoes from Ireland had been prohibited except under licence from the Food Controller, and from time to time he had either forbidden potatoes to be exported from Scotland to England or Wales (except to certain specified counties), or he had scheduled areas into which potatoes were not to be sent in order that the inhabitants might live on their own production.

Deficit Zones and Surplus Areas

Under the new arrangements that were now made England and Wales were divided into eleven deficit zones, which would need at some time or other during the year to import potatoes from elsewhere, and twelve surplus areas, which would export potatoes to London and other large industrial centres. The surplus zones were the East and North Ridings of

Yorkshire, Lincoln, and the Soke of Peterborough, Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent (outside the London postal area), Cambridge and the Isle of Ely, Huntingdon, Anglesea, Flint, Carnarvon, Denbigh, Montgomery, and Merioneth. Probably because we had exaggerated ideas as to the quantity of potatoes grown in the Ormskirk area we were somewhat surprised to find the counties of the North-West Division classified as a deficiency zone, and to learn that in normal times it imported supplies from Ireland. In each surplus zone a Zonal Committee was appointed responsible for organizing the collection of potatoes for export to other areas, and in each deficit zone there was a Potato Control Committee, under the chairmanship of the Divisional Commissioner. These Committees were empowered to issue directions relating to the collection and disposal of potatoes. Neither growers nor wholesale dealers were allowed to sell to anyone outside their own zone unless they obtained a licence authorizing them to do so. If a wholesale dealer was unable to obtain sufficient potatoes in his own zone to meet his requirements he sent an indent to the secretary of the Potato Control Committee, giving particulars of the quantities of each grade of potatoes he required, and the Committee then made arrangements to obtain supplies for him from some surplus zone through the Zonal Committee. Wholesalers were required to keep accounts of all their transactions and were paid by a commission. Retailers were supplied at a uniform price, and the potatoes were sold at a flat rate to the consumer ; but the Ministry soon reverted to the method of the earlier schemes, whereby the retail price varied with the cost of the potatoes to the retailer. Both this scheme and the preceding one entailed a large amount of work not only upon the Assistant Commissioner for Potatoes, who had an

office in Southport, but upon the Divisional Accountant and his staff, who had to check and meet claims either for differences between the selling price and the base price, or for potatoes from another zone to meet the requirements of wholesalers, for commissions, bags, etc. In fact, the control of potatoes became so large a business, and so specialised, that the management of it was left nearly altogether in the hands of Mr. Tom Moor, who had been appointed Assistant Commissioner and had a wide experience in the trade.

The schemes which I have just outlined only dealt with ware potatoes, but seed potatoes were not forgotten. Several Orders were issued, the stringency of which tended to increase as time went on. The Ministry appears to have had two objects in view in these Orders. One, to encourage the use of potatoes grown in Scotland or Ireland as giving better results than potatoes from those countries once grown in England and Wales ; the other, to control the stocks of those seed potatoes which were immune from wart disease, and in conjunction with the Board of Agriculture to prohibit the planting of the non-immune varieties in infected areas.

Various other regulations were made which may be mentioned together. One provision forbade ware potatoes to be used except for seed or human food, and other potatoes to be used except for seed, human or animal food, and the manufacture of articles of human and animal food, but not of spirits. Another required owners of potatoes to take reasonable precautions to protect them from frost, damp or other damage, and in particular called upon persons who consigned potatoes for transport by rail in open trucks during the months of December, January, February, March, and April to protect them by strawing the trucks or by some

other method. A third prohibited the sale of potatoes, except by weight or otherwise than in a reasonably clean condition, unless the sale was a sale of potatoes in the ground by the grower of them. Growers of potatoes were ordered to furnish returns setting forth the estimated quantities in their possession on the first day of each month, and the quantities consumed or delivered in the preceding month, and vendors of seed potatoes to give to the buyer a declaration correctly stating the class, variety, and dressing of the potatoes sold, with the serial number of the certificate, if they were sold from crops immune from wart disease and had been certified as being reasonably free from "rogues." Finally, every person who dealt in potatoes, except a grower selling his own potatoes, was required to hold a certificate of registration. At first, all these certificates were issued by Food Control Committees, but later the granting of them to wholesalers was taken out of their hands and reserved to the Food Controller. Coincidentally it was required that application for certificates as wholesale dealers in ware potatoes should be made through the National Federation of Fruit and Potato Trades Associations, a provision which we protested against more than once, for it seemed to us that the Federation was not anxious that the number of wholesalers should be increased.

Jam and Fruit

All the chief foodstuffs that were regulated, whether in price or distribution, have now been touched upon, with the exception of jam, which (as Orders dealing with it explained) included jelly, conserve, and marmalade. Now, jam obtained an importance that it would not otherwise have acquired from the fact that it was one of the chief items in the rations served out to the army and navy, and that large quantities of

“plum and apple” and other varieties were required to meet the demands of the services. The necessity of setting apart sufficient supplies for this purpose so reduced those available for the home population that rationing became inevitable.

To aggravate the situation it unfortunately happened that the year 1918 was so bad a year for every kind of fruit that it became necessary to limit the consumption of it by the general public in order to reserve it as far as possible for the making of jam. It will be seen, therefore, that the control of jam involved the control of fruit also.

Various Orders were issued to protect the ordinary consumer of fruit from exorbitant prices, but a glance at the earlier ones makes it clear that it was the imperative necessity of providing jam that was the main reason for the imposition of control on fruit. The first two Orders that were passed forbade jam manufacturers to pay more than certain prices for stone fruit, and called upon every grower of raspberries in Scotland whose total crop exceeded 1cwt. to deliver them to the Food Controller.* In May of the following year two Orders were issued, one of which prohibited the picking or selling of gooseberries before an appointed date, and the other required growers of more than 5cwts. to sell them only to a licensed jam manufacturer, or to a recognized fruit salesman for re-sale to a jam manufacturer.† These were followed in turn by similar Orders dealing with soft fruit and certain varieties of plums, damsons, and apples.

* The Stone Fruit (Jam Manufacturers' Prices) Order, 1917, and The Raspberries (Scotland) Delivery Order, 1917.

† The Gooseberries Order, 1918, and The Gooseberries (Sales) (England and Wales) Order, 1918.

Apples

The provisions of the Order relating to apples were somewhat complicated. In the first place, all apples that would pass through a ring two inches in diameter (except certain well-known eating varieties that were specified in a schedule) were declared to be "jam apples," and might only be sold to manufacturers of jam, pulp, or cider, and at prices not exceeding certain fixed maxima. Secondly, no apples might be used for the manufacture of cider except under licence. On the other hand, Cox's Orange Pippins, which would not pass through a ring of two inches in diameter, and the apples of the specified varieties, which would not pass through a ring of $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, were not affected by the Order or controlled in price, provided they were separated out by the grower and sold and invoiced wholesale under their proper names or ticketed and sold retail under those names. One of the results of this Order was that Divisional Inspectors were provided with rings with which they visited fruiterers' shops and tried "to put apples through the hoop." They faithfully performed this duty, as they did all others that were placed upon them, but their efforts to detect breaches of the Order were severely handicapped by the fact that it would have required an expert to have decided the proper name or variety of all the apples that were exposed for sale.

Blackberries

Even wild blackberries were an object of the Ministry's solicitous care, but the method of dealing with them differed widely from that employed in the case of other fruits. No restriction was placed upon their disposal, but as jam manufacturers were allowed to pay as much as £42 a ton, or $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ a lb., for them, while a fruit retailer was forbidden to charge more than

4*d.* a lb., it will be seen that a strong inducement was offered to those persons who had blackberries for sale to sell them to jam makers rather than to fruiterers. But, not content with controlling the price in this manner, a scheme was introduced in the autumn of 1918 for the organised collection of blackberries by school children. An organizer was appointed for each county, who, with the sanction and approval of the County Education Committee, got in touch with head teachers, who were made local agents. The teachers arranged blackberry picking expeditions for the children on half-holidays or out of school hours, the teachers receiving £3 a ton and the children 3*d.* a lb. on the quantities collected. The county was divided into districts, and all the fruit collected in one district was consigned to the same manufacturer, who was selected to receive the supplies either on the ground that his works were nearest to the district or that he was prepared to convey them. Baskets capable of holding 24lbs. of fruit were provided by the Ministry and sent to the teachers, who despatched them when filled to the various jam manufacturers by passenger train, unless the latter were willing to collect them. On the whole, the scheme worked well, and many tons of blackberries were obtained for jam making which would otherwise have rotted on the bushes ; but, simple as it may seem from this description, it involved a very large amount of work and trouble.

Not the least important of the provisions that were contained in the various Orders dealing with fruit was one which made it compulsory for it to be sold by weight. Though it seemed rather strange to buy oranges in this way, and though the practice of weighing all kinds of fruit has probably been discontinued now that it is no longer compulsory, no one will

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dispute but that it is a more satisfactory method of purchase than buying by measure.

Jam Distribution Scheme

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Ministry to maintain the production of jam, supplies were so short towards the end of 1918 that it was decided to ration it on the basis of 4ozs. per head per week from November 3rd, and to put a complete distribution scheme in operation on December 29th. The complete scheme differed from distribution schemes for other foodstuffs in that it contemplated that each Division should be self-supporting, and provide, so far as possible, the supplies required in the divisional area from jam manufactured in that area. In order to effect this, retailers and establishments were permitted to give the names of the wholesalers or manufacturers with whom they had been in the habit of dealing, but the vouchers, which were issued to them by Food Control Committees, were sent not to the wholesalers or manufacturers named by them but to Divisional Headquarters, where a clearing house was set up under the direction of an Assistant Commissioner for Jam, or, as he was more generally called, a Jam Distribution Officer.

Where the senders of the vouchers had been in the habit of dealing with manufacturers in the Division the Jam Distribution Officer assigned the vouchers as far as possible to those manufacturers, but if the retailer or establishment did not name a manufacturer in the Division, or if the manufacturer named had already had vouchers assigned to him up to the extent of his capacity to fulfil, the vouchers were assigned to some other manufacturer in the Division, until the output of all manufacturers was allocated. Similarly, if wholesalers in the Division had been accustomed to

supply, the vouchers were sent to them, but if the retailer or establishment had formerly dealt with a wholesaler out of the Division the vouchers were assigned to one within it.

The North-West Division was in the fortunate position of having a large number of jam factories within its borders, and was regarded as a surplus area, which might be called upon to meet deficiencies in other Divisions, such as North Wales. Notwithstanding that, the shortage was so acute that it was impossible to satisfy even one-half the demands in jam, and the balance had to be made up in orange or lemon marmalade. It was a glorious time for the small or the recently-established manufacturers, who found themselves provided with customers without the trouble of competing for them. Of course, most applicants wished to be allocated to well-known makers, but as this was impossible they had either to take supplies from such sources as the Jam Distribution Officer indicated or to go without. Fortunately for the harassed Jam Distribution Officer, there was a firm in the Division which had greatly increased their output, and, having commenced business comparatively recently, had not as large a number of customers on their books as the older makers. We found them a very present help in time of trouble, while it may reasonably be supposed that in assisting the Ministry of Food they did not go altogether unrewarded, for the name of Carr, White and Company became known throughout the length and breadth of the Division.

Dried Fruit

Before leaving the subject of jam and fruit it should be mentioned that not only fresh fruit but dried fruit, like dates, prunes, currants and raisins, and "evaporated" fruit, such as apple rings and apricots, were

also controlled. All stocks of currants and raisins were taken possession of by the Ministry, and allocated to wholesalers on the basis of their home sales during the period July 1st, 1915, to June 30th, 1916, the wholesalers undertaking to distribute such quantities as they received amongst their customers in proportion to their dealings with them during that period. Owing to the necessity of meeting the requirements of the army and navy these were not large, and the housewife was hard put to it to make mince pies and plum pudding at Christmas time. Part of the difficulty that was experienced in obtaining supplies was due to the fact that currants and raisins were only rationed to the trade and not to the consumer. Many retailers who sold sugar had not been in the habit of selling dried fruit, and consequently received no supplies. Their sugar customers, therefore, had to go to other grocers, who not unnaturally kept what small stocks they had for the persons who dealt with them in other articles or whom they favoured for some other reason. It was true that a Food Control Committee might have requisitioned stocks from one retailer and handed them over to another, but probably because no retailer ever possessed any very large quantity this power was never, or hardly ever, exercised. Though this shortage of dried fruit was not really a serious matter, as we could have lived quite well if there had been none at all, still it was a constant source of annoyance and irritation and was a fertile breeding ground for complaints.

Enforcement of Orders

The reader will, I hope, have obtained by now some idea of the variety and complexity of the Orders and instructions that were issued by the Ministry. In order that they might be carried out it was necessary that some method of enforcing their observance should

be provided. There were, of course, the police, but the orders were so numerous, and in certain cases so technical, that it was impossible to rely solely upon their efforts. Accordingly, Food Control Committees were empowered either to prosecute or to enter into an arrangement with the local authority whereby the latter undertook the burden of doing it. In practice, what generally happened was that the Food Control Committee retained the power of enforcement but availed themselves of the services of officials of the local authority, such as weights and measures inspectors, though some of the Food Control Committees for the larger towns and cities had their own special staffs. Further, the Divisional Commissioner was also given the power to prosecute, and a separate department was set up under an Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement, with a number of Divisional Inspectors attached to him, who not only served the needs of those rural districts which were too small to warrant the appointment of even a part-time inspector, but were also available for duty in any district in which there was reason to believe that the Food Control Committee was becoming lax, or that retailers or the general public were setting at naught the commands of the Food Controller. While Mr. Cotman, the Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement, thus exercised a watchful and a fatherly care over those parts of the Division that were suffering from inattention or neglect, he did much more than that, for he was also consulted in all cases in which the Food Control Committee or the local authority was in any doubt as to the interpretation of an Order, the form of the information to be laid, the advisability of instituting proceedings, etc. Cases in which there was any doubt were referred by him to the Enforcement Branch of the Ministry of Food in London for their decision, but

as Food Control Committees generally demanded that the problem submitted by them should be resolved without delay this course was not often adopted. Moreover, there were two other solicitors in the office, and if the Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement desired to consult them a full court was generally constituted at tea time.

Food Hoarding

The earliest and not the least difficult of the questions that arose from the construction of Orders was the definition of hoarding. Clause 1 (a) of the Food Hoarding Order, 1917, laid down that no person should acquire any article of food so that the quantity of such article in his possession or under his control at any one time exceeded the quantity required for ordinary use and consumption in his household or establishment. The weakness, or the strength, of the clause—it depends upon how you regard it—was that it did not contain any definition of “hoarding,” or lay down how many days’ or weeks’ supply could be considered to be required for ordinary use and consumption in a household.

Food Control Committees began to forward conundrums which had been propounded to them. For example, a man had been in the habit of receiving a present of cheese weighing about 40lbs. at Christmas, and it had been sent as usual. His family consisted of himself, his wife, three children of ages ranging from twelve to seven years, and two domestic servants. The Divisional Commissioner would please advise (1) whether the man might safely accept the cheese, (2) how much of it he might keep, and (3) how he was to dispose of the balance. Again: For several years last past a man had obtained a year’s supply of tea direct from Ceylon. This year’s supply was on its

way. What was he to do about it? Once more: An Asylums Board was accustomed to buy for one of its institutions three months' supply of food from wholesale provision merchants, and the price was fixed on the understanding that it should be delivered in one consignment. The suppliers' place of business was thirty miles away, and to deliver in several consignments meant increased charges for transport. What was the largest quantity that the Board might accept?

A decision of the High Court which laid down that tea was not an "article of food"* solved the tea problem temporarily, but in other cases it was impossible to give the clear-cut reply that was sought. All that could be done was to point out that it was impossible to give an exact definition of hoarding, and that the decision as to whether or not food had been acquired in such quantities as to constitute an offence rested with the justices and would depend upon the circumstances of the case, but that it was thought that three to four weeks' supply might probably be held with safety.

Rabbit Skins

Then there was the problem of the respective rights of the shopkeeper and the purchaser to the skin of the rabbit which the latter had bought. The Wild Rabbits (Prices) Order, 1918, laid down that wild rabbits should be sold by weight, and that the weight of the skin might be included in the weight if the skin was included in the sale. In practice the retailer weighed the rabbit with the skin on, then asked the customer if he would like it skinned, and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, skinned it and retained the skin. Had the retailer infringed the Order, or had the sale been completed and the purchaser then given the skin

* Hinde v. Allmond, 118 L. T. Rep., 447.

to the retailer or tacitly consented to his keeping it? A difficult question, the answer to which depended upon the conversation that passed between the retailer and the purchaser and the general attitude and conduct of the latter at the time of sale.*

But it was not in retail transactions only that rabbit skins caused trouble. They affected the whole scheme of control of the prices of wild rabbits. The Order fixed the price to be charged by the trapper to the wholesaler at 6*d.* a lb., and that to be charged by the wholesaler to the retailer at 8*d.* a lb., thus allowing the wholesaler a profit of 2*d.* a lb., out of which he had to pay carriage from the trapper. Now, the value of the skin varied from 7*d.* to 1*s.* 3*d.* Consequently, if the wholesaler skinned the rabbit, threw the body away, and sold the skin he stood to make more profit in some cases than he could obtain by selling the rabbit to the retailer at the controlled price. It was no wonder that retailers, who generally managed to retain the skin, were willing to pay more than the price fixed by the Order and actually advertised the fact.

The suggestion that the wholesaler might have thrown the body of the rabbit away reminds me that such an act would have been a violation of the Waste of Foodstuffs Order, 1918, which forbade any person to waste any foodstuff, or to cause or permit it to be wasted. This Order was most frequently invoked to punish farmers who had permitted crops to remain unharvested or had omitted to thatch stacks of grain, though it also covered such offences as the pouring away of milk to prevent its being taken for analysis, and the throwing away of bread by unthrifty housewives. How wide its scope was may be gathered from the following curious inquiry which was addressed to

* See Warburton *v.* Stamp, reported in *Weekly Bulletin*, No. 92.

the Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement : If a hare is coursed by a dog, and is so mangled that its carcase is unfit to be used for human food, can the owner of the dog be prosecuted ?

Many legal points arose from time to time which called for careful consideration before it could be decided whether or not a prosecution would lie. One that was of frequent occurrence turned upon the construction to be placed upon clause 1 of the Meat (Control) Order, 1917, which prohibited any person from dealing in dead meat by retail except in, or about, or in connection with, premises in respect of which he was the holder of a certificate of registration. Butchers who held certificates reported farmers who did not, but who had killed pigs and sold pork and bacon to their milk customers. When it was demanded that proceedings should be taken it became necessary to point out that what was forbidden by the Order was not "selling" but "dealing," and that as it appeared in most cases that the pig had been primarily reared for the use of the farmer's household, that only the surplus meat had been sold, and that it was not done more than once or twice a year, a summons for "dealing" would not have much chance of success.

Whether or not an occasional sale constituted "dealing" was never decided, however, but when a fish dealer was convicted at Liverpool of charging retail prices for salmon on wholesale sales and appealed to the Divisional Court, we obtained a legal definition of what a "wholesale sale" was.

One clause that was included in most of the Orders which required retailers to register called forth numerous inquiries from Executive Officers. The clause enacted that a retail dealer might be registered as a hawker or costermonger, and in such case should sell only from his cart, stall, or barrow, and at such other place, if

any, as might be named in the certificate. Every Executive Officer was naturally jealous that the jurisdiction of his Committee should not be invaded by neighbouring Committees, and a considerable proportion of them wrote at once to inquire whether a hawker who had received a certificate from the Committee of an adjoining district was entitled to perambulate his district without obtaining a certificate from him.

Now and again doubts arose as to the construction to be placed upon certain Orders, but on the whole they were well drafted, and the majority of the cases that were reported did not call for much consideration from a purely legal standpoint. They were chiefly breaches of the numerous regulations imposing maximum prices, or of the almost equally numerous regulations requiring price lists or labels to be displayed. As a rule offenders were faithfully dealt with by the justices before whom they appeared, though in a few instances benches seemed to be unduly lenient. A favourite defence was ignorance of the Order in question, and if the Order had been recently issued, or the Assistant Commissioner for Enforcement, or the Food Control Committee, was of the opinion that the explanation given was genuine and reasonable, the trader was merely warned, for it was no part of the policy of the Ministry to unduly harass people who were as a rule giving them loyal support under difficult circumstances. On the other hand, there were a few individuals who persistently and flagrantly broke the regulations. There was a short and sharp method of dealing with them. If they were retailers their certificates were withdrawn and their customers transferred to other shopkeepers ; if they were wholesalers, as most foodstuffs were distributed directly or indirectly by the Ministry their supplies could be withheld.

This was a drastic step, and, as it took away the trader's livelihood, it was only resorted to when all other remedies had failed.

The fines that were imposed for offences against the Orders of the Food Controller went, like fines in ordinary prosecutions, to the county or borough fund. In one day at Kirkham a number of wholesale fish merchants were fined varying sums amounting in the whole to £1,000, while in a prosecution at Liverpool a firm of jam manufacturers had to pay £100 on each of ten summonses. These were exceptional cases, but as prosecutions were numerous in 1918 and 1919 the total sum realised from this source must have been substantial. It seems only fair that in counting the cost of the Ministry of Food credit should be given to it for these contributions to the expenses of local government.

CHAPTER VIII

The Isle of Man

Now that the various methods of controlling the principal articles of food and of enforcing the Orders relating to them have been described it is possible to refer to two matters which had no connection with our ordinary work and demand separate treatment. The first of these was the devising of a scheme of rationing for the Isle of Man. Though the Isle of Man, owing probably to its geographical position, was considered to be within the sphere of influence of the North-West Division, neither the Food Controller nor the Divisional Commissioner had any real jurisdiction over it, for it was an independent community, and the Governor, Lord Raglan, had only adopted such Orders of the Food Controller as he had thought fit. Sugar was rationed in accordance with the methods prevailing in England ; the Food Hoarding Order, the Waste of Foodstuffs Order, the Public Meals Order, the Cake and Pastry Order, and various Orders fixing prices, which did not differ in any material particular from their English counterparts, had been issued, but no steps had been taken to ration other foodstuffs to the consumer. It is true that margarine, bacon, and lard which were imported from England were supposed to be distributed to the retailers in proportion to the estimated numbers of their customers, but this was largely supposition, for while no one had any difficulty in obtaining as much margarine as they wanted the supplies of lard were quite inadequate. This absence of a rationing system was of little consequence until the visitors, who had stopped going there when war broke out, began to resume their pre-war habits, for the majority of the inhabitants consisted of small wage-earning individuals, who could

not afford to purchase food in excess of the ration fixed on the mainland. Many reasons had contributed to prevent the people of Lancashire and Yorkshire from spending their holidays in the Isle of Man during the early years of the war, not the least powerful of them being the frequent appearance of enemy submarines off the mouth of the Mersey. But when it became generally believed in the summer of 1918 that the Germans had decided not to torpedo boats running between the Isle of Man and the mainland, because they might be carrying German prisoners to or from the two large camps that had been built on the Island, and when it became widely known also that the Island, if not flowing with milk and honey, had at any rate ample supplies of meat and jam and large stocks of whisky of pre-war strength, the invasion began to assume considerable proportions. Though it was not on anything like the scale which had prevailed in peace time, and the promenade at Douglas had a forlorn and desolate appearance owing to the number of boarding-houses and shops that were closed, it was large enough to make it evident that the few and simple regulations that were in force were inadequate for the new situation which had arisen. In the first place, the existence of a place where there was practically no rationing, and where no limit (except that imposed by the Food Hoarding Order) was placed upon the quantities of food that could be bought, was likely to create dissatisfaction amongst those persons upon the mainland who for any reason were unable to avail themselves of the privileges which it offered. Secondly, the increased consumption of meat owing to the arrival of the visitors, who, not content with eating their fill were also taking joints away with them, was having a serious effect upon the exports to the mainland. It was estimated that whereas 20,000 sheep had been

sent to England in 1917, the figure for 1918 would not exceed 12,000. Lastly, many of the boats of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company had been taken over by the Admiralty in the early days of the war, and the fleet had been reduced to three comparatively small steamers. Owing to the pressure of the passenger traffic the Company was unable to ship to the mainland the available store cattle and sheep. The fishing industry was being disorganized through the same cause. The fishing boats at Ramsey, thirty in number, had to cease fishing on Thursday in every week, as the Company was unable to accept and land the fish at Liverpool during the holiday pressure, and no other method of transport was available.

The position having been brought to the notice of the Ministry of Food, Mr. Bohane was instructed to report on the matter, and he and I spent several days in the island making ourselves acquainted with the situation and discussing the question of rationing with the authorities. The chief objection of the Governor to the introduction of a scheme on the lines of that in force in England was the cost, which he estimated would not be less than £10,000 a year—a very large sum for a poor place whose total household population, calculated on the sugar-buying basis, only amounted to 40,923 persons; but the Town Clerks, who were also the Executive Officers, were also inclined to oppose it on the ground that it would diminish the stream of holiday makers, whose money was instilling new life into the veins of a community which had been almost paralysed by the war. One could not but sympathise with these feelings. It seemed somewhat hard to call upon the Island exchequer to pay so large a sum in order to curb the appetites of persons whose pockets were bulging with the high wages they had received in munition factories, when the benefit was

to be reaped not by the inhabitants of the Island itself but by those of other parts of the United Kingdom. Again, there were no factories or works of any size in the Island, and, apart from agriculture, its main industry was catering for the requirements of visitors. The complete cutting off of the revenue derived from this source had inflicted great hardship upon numbers of persons who relied for their living upon the money they could make during the holiday season, and it will be readily appreciated with what apprehension they viewed any project that might have the effect of checking the stream that had begun to flow again. Still, it was reluctantly agreed that unless the visiting traffic was to be restricted or shut down completely—which was unthinkable—rationing arrangements would have to be made in order to prevent them from depleting its stocks of food. We were engaged in devising a modification of those in force in England for introduction into the Island when the signing of the Armistice fortunately made it possible to put this work on one side.

Strikes

The strikes which took place and affected the production or the distribution of food during their continuance form the other matter to which I wish to refer. During the life of the Ministry of Food there were several such strikes, which were of concern to us while they lasted. At one time the employees of the Co-operative Societies in Cumberland and Westmorland came out, and it became necessary for the Executive Officers of the different districts affected to transfer the Societies' customers to other retailers as a temporary measure. In Manchester, at another period, a dispute arose as to wages, and the gas workers in the employ of the Corporation struck. This

endangered the bread supply, for we discovered—we were always making discoveries—that the larger firms of bakers used coke, and not coal, for bread baking. This fact being realised, the existing stocks of coke were at once reserved for the bakers and arrangements made to supplement them with supplies from other gas works if the continuance of the strike made it necessary. However, through the good offices of Alderman Fox, the Labour Lord Mayor, a settlement was arrived at more quickly than had been hoped, and work was resumed without many people being aware that their daily bread had been in jeopardy.

On more than one occasion the slaughtermen, at both Manchester and Liverpool, either struck or threatened to strike, thus endangering the supplies of meat. Captain Swetenham, the Area Live Stock Commissioner, was successful in averting a strike at least once, but when at length the repeated demands for increases of wages were met with a firm refusal by the wholesalers at Manchester all efforts at mediation proved unavailing. Regarding the strike, as we did, simply from the effect it would have upon the distribution of meat, we were naturally pleased to find that the ill effects we feared did not result, as the private slaughter-houses proved able to cope with the work. Eventually the strike collapsed and the men were largely replaced by others, but not before the movement had had a serious effect upon the trade at the abattoirs.

From October 14th to the 29th, 1920, there was a threatened strike of the miners and the railwaymen, and the arrangements that had been made for such emergencies were put into operation, while the staff was ordered to "stand to." Fortunately, the threat was not translated into action, and the only loss to the community was a small financial one.

The Railway Strike

These, however, were only incidents and did not cause much anxiety, but the railway strike, which commenced at midnight on September 26th and lasted until midnight on October 5th, 1919, was a very different affair. It was, as will be remembered, a "lightning" strike, and the railwaymen ceased work without serving or giving any notice, with the result that the transport of food was almost entirely deranged and disorganized. Though every Division had been busy for some time in preparing a scheme to provide for the distribution of food in what was always referred to as "an emergency," yet the suddenness with which it came at last left us almost breathless. Though this was a disadvantage, yet it was probably more than compensated for by the effect which such precipitate action had upon the general public. Almost before the man in the street had realised that a dispute had arisen or had had time to consider the merits of it, he found himself unable to get to his business in the morning, his letters and newspapers cut off, and his very food in peril. Had the Government acted in a similar way and locked out the railwaymen without warning, such an outcry would have been raised as would have compelled it to give way and would indubitably have brought about its fall. As it was, the ordinary, well-meaning citizen awoke one morning to discover that *he* was locked out by a body of men whose grievances might have been undeniable but who had not made it plain to him what they were. It was no wonder that he resented it, that he came in hundreds to offer his help, and that under the flame of his resentment the strike shriveled and died.

It is, I hope, unnecessary to say that it was no part of our business to act either as propagandists for the Government, or as strike breakers. Our duty was

simply to see that no one, whether he was a striker or not, went short of food owing to the stoppage of the railways, and that we did not exceed our duty was generally admitted when the strike came to an end, even by those who sympathised with the railwaymen.

Arrangements for "an Emergency"

It would be tedious to describe in detail the scheme that had been gradually elaborated for the purpose of dealing with such a situation as this, but one or two of its salient principles may be briefly described. In the first place, it may be pointed out that the rationing system had put the Ministry of Food in possession of valuable and exact information, not only as to the requirements of every town and village in the way of meat, sugar, margarine, and other commodities, but as to the sources from which they were drawn. It was well known what places were self-supporting, and in what respects : it was equally well known what kinds and quantities of food would be needed in other places and from where they were obtained. For instance, the knowledge acquired during the course of disputes which had occurred in various districts over milk prices would almost have enabled Mr. Linaker and Mr. Magee, without further effort or enquiry, to have prepared a complete list of the places in the Division which relied for their supplies, either wholly or in part, upon rail-borne milk, and to have indicated the localities from which they were in the habit of drawing.

Cold Stores

Again, the situation of every cold store in the Division, its capacity, and its contents were known and noted, so that it was possible to consign to one or other of them stocks of food which could be drawn upon when other sources of supply had failed. Incidentally

it may be said that in view of the fact that England had to be provisioned in the war almost as if it were a beleaguered city, and that perishable foodstuffs had to be brought in, not at the precise moment when there was sufficient accommodation for them but whenever opportunity offered, it soon became evident that however suitable the cold storage capacity might be for normal times it was inadequate for such circumstances as these, with the result that certain quantities of bacon and other commodities went bad and had to be destroyed. Still, though this difficulty could not be completely overcome, it was minimized to a certain extent by inducing wholesalers who had satisfactory accommodation to take large supplies or to hold additional stocks on the Ministry's account. In some Divisions stocks of foodstuffs were collected and dumps were formed in certain places which were at a distance from their usual source of supply and were consequently likely to feel the pinch sooner than others, but this Division was fortunate enough to have ready-made dumps within it in the warehouses of the cities of Manchester and Liverpool, which were within easy distance by road transport from the thickly-populated parts of Lancashire.

The Government possessed another advantage in the fact that the rationing system was still in force, though its stringency had been considerably relaxed, and they were consequently able to issue Orders reducing the quantities of sugar, margarine, and meat that might be supplied to purchasers and replacing upon the list of rationed articles such things as jam, which had previously been struck off. Power to do this, amongst other things, was conferred upon Divisional Commissioners, and in the North-West Division advantage was taken of it, not because there was any general shortage of food, but in order to preserve the

stocks that were in the hands of the retailers and to limit the transport that it would be necessary to employ to replace them.

Food Control Committees were grouped and instructed to organize local transport and to make use of horse vehicles whenever and wherever possible. They were also requested to pool retailers' requirements, to organize local labour for loading and off-loading, to make arrangements to billet drivers who might be away from home, to requisition foodstuffs from retailers if necessary to secure equitable local distribution, and generally to render assistance to the Responsible Officers. The Responsible Officers* were the direct personal representatives of the Divisional Commissioner, and were the heads of different areas into which the Division was divided for transport purposes. All orders from the trade for the movement of foodstuffs passed through them, and transport was only provided in respect of orders approved by them.

When the Emergency Scheme was being considered in the first instance it was unanimously agreed that if success was to be attained arrangements should be based on the understanding that, so far as possible, trade should follow the usual channels, and that traders should be encouraged to work out their own salvation, with such assistance as it was possible to give them. It was to their interest to obtain and to distribute supplies, and they were accordingly instructed to use their own transport facilities, only appealing to Divisional Headquarters to supplement them as occasion demanded. Only in one case, that of the Liverpool milk supply, was this rule departed from and the transport of milk organized and carried out by the Ministry.

* They are to be distinguished from the Responsible Officers appointed under the Margarine Scheme.

Transport Arrangements

The control of road transport under the Divisional Commissioner was in the charge of Captain Reginald Page. When Mr. Gosselin resigned his position of Assistant Commissioner for Transport shortly after the Armistice the vacancy thus created was not filled. On July 21st, 1919, however, the supervision of road transport was transferred from the Road Transport Board to the Ministry of Food, and Captain Page, who had been in the employ of the former body, joined our staff. Under him, again, were several Transport Officers stationed at various points throughout the Division, who provided the vehicles necessary to carry the foodstuffs the orders for which had been franked by the Responsible Officers.

Supplies of Foodstuffs

In certain cases the supplies in the hands of the retailers were sufficient to have lasted much longer than the nine days during which the strike continued, and consequently no demands for transport were made in respect of them. In the matter of sugar, owing to the delay which occurred in rail transport during the war the Ministry had allowed and even encouraged retailers to accumulate a reserve amounting to one month's supply, which the retail trade as a whole was not unwilling to do at a time when the trend of prices was in an upward direction. From a rationing point of view this was not altogether satisfactory, as it tempted grocers to listen to the blandishments of those of their customers who wished to obtain more than their rationed allowance, but when the strike was upon us the virtues of this policy were more fully appreciated.

Owing to the fact that bread and flour were not rationed, and that no figures existed which gave the stocks of grain in the hands of the millers or the

stocks of flour in the possession of the wholesalers and retailers, proper provision had not been made to see that these were plentiful or at least adequate. When, therefore, at the commencement of the strike it was found that the stocks of traders in Cumberland and Westmorland were low, and that millers in Lancashire had only two or three days' supplies of grain, arrangements had to be made at once to send additional regular supplies. A committee of millers was accordingly set up who took full charge of millers' demands, and acted so effectively that there were sent forward from Manchester hundreds of tons to Cheshire, Blackburn, and other places, and about a thousand tons to the West Riding of Yorkshire.

Not less important than flour was yeast, which at one time appeared to be in danger of being overlooked. Perhaps this is not so surprising as it seems. In packing a suit case for a journey most men will take care that they have with them sufficient collars to meet all possible requirements, but will very likely depend upon one solitary, hard-worked collar stud, though, should the latter by some mischance get lost or broken they will speedily recognise its importance in their scheme of dress. Similarly, while every article of food that had been controlled received its meed of consideration, this essential constituent of bread, never having been brought prominently to our notice, either by any scarcity of it or any increase in its price, almost escaped attention. However, it is possible that this was more seeming than reality, for long before the strike commenced a plan had been prepared for its collection and distribution. It is common knowledge that yeast is produced at distilleries, and as there are comparatively few distilleries in England there were naturally only small supplies in this country. Liverpool, Derby, Bristol, Wolverhampton and Manchester could be relied upon

for certain quantities, but the bulk of the requirements of the country had to be obtained from Scotland and Ireland. Arrangements made for its carriage by sea proved quite satisfactory, and there was always sufficient to meet our needs.

The distribution of meat worked so smoothly that in most places adequate supplies of home-killed meat were available, and it was only necessary to issue a small proportion of imported meat. The people in East Lancashire once again saw cattle being walked to market, a sight which probably furnished the oldest inhabitant with a text for a discourse on the good old days. The confidence which we reposed in traders was fully justified in this case, for it was mainly due to the energy and initiative that was shown by the local Butchers' Committees that the Division did not go short of meat.

There was no shortage of bacon, and as the ordinary periodical distribution of butter and cheese by the Ministry had just been made the stocks in the possession of the retailers were sufficient to meet all legitimate calls upon them for more than a month. The position with regard to margarine, also, was very different from what it had been when rationing was introduced. The total output had been enormously increased, and the fortunate circumstance that several factories were situated in the Division made it easy to satisfy all requirements.

Though there is a large area around Ormskirk devoted to the production of potatoes, the supplies from this source were not sufficient for the needs of the Division, and consequently additional quantities were imported from Ireland to Manchester, Liverpool, and Preston. Arrangements for motor transport were made through Executive Officers in towns where potatoes were required, and in the case of large towns, such as

Blackburn and Burnley, delivery was taken by the Local Food Control Committees, who distributed them to the various dealers according to their requirements.

The fact that all trains ceased running at midnight on September 26th, regardless of the question as to whether or not they had reached their destination, caused the loss of many consignments of fish. Owing to its extremely perishable nature, it was scarcely thought possible that satisfactory arrangements could be made for distributing fish during an emergency, but the difficulties were not so great as had been anticipated, and 600 tons were sent from Fleetwood by road transport during the strike period.

The matter that gave us the most thought and anxiety was the collection and transport of milk for Manchester and Liverpool and their environs. About 80 per cent. of all the milk consumed in the Division was retailed by the producer and was unaffected by the strike, but these cities and several other large towns in Lancashire were mainly dependent on supplies brought by rail from a distance. Churns had consequently to be picked up at various points and taken by motor transport to the depots which had been fixed, at which points they were taken control of by the trade and the milk distributed to the retailers according to their requirements. As regards the Liverpool area, the transport for this purpose was arranged and controlled by Divisional Headquarters, but in the Manchester area, where the milk trade was better organised, the Dairymen's Association undertook the responsibility of collecting and distributing supplies on the necessary lorries being set apart by the Divisional Transport Officer. So successfully did the scheme operate that, while Liverpool obtained a supply that was adequate under the circumstances, Manchester actually received

more than its normal daily consumption. Certain losses were incurred owing to consignments becoming sour, and the cost of carrying out the emergency milk scheme was undoubtedly very heavy. In fact, the whole affair was such a serious expense to the country that one may be forgiven for expressing a fervent hope that the time may not be far distant when resort will be had to arbitration not only when differences arise between nation and nation, but also when they occur within the narrower limits of a country and its industries.

The Death of the Ministry

And now there remains the melancholy task of tracing the decline and fall of the Ministry of Food and the organization which it had set up.

Though it was scarcely realised at the time, the bells that pealed forth when the news of the signing of the Armistice arrived were ringing the Ministry's knell, for as soon as the war conditions which had brought it into existence ceased to exist it was inevitable that, sooner or later, it should cease to exist also. Still, it was not so easy a matter as certain journalists and politicians imagined to revert from State control to free competition, and had it been done as rapidly as some people wished there is little doubt but that it would temporarily have resulted in chaos and caused much loss not only to taxpayers but to traders also. The whole system of trade, as it had been carried on before August, 1914, had been turned upside down. The Ministry of Food had prohibited traders from purchasing certain foodstuffs, and called upon them to hold any stocks they had acquired previously to the Ministry's order. They themselves bought, not to make a profit, but in order to provision this country or to obtain supplies for the Allies. Whether or not

they always bought wisely is beside the question : the point is that it was necessary for them to obtain food to avert famine, and to retain its distribution in their own hands so that it might be sold at a reasonable price and that no one should obtain more than his rightful share. Though they availed themselves of the services of traders to carry out the work of distribution, and remunerated them for their services, it is obvious that under this system there was no room for either legitimate speculation or private enterprise. In pursuance of this policy they had bought meat from New Zealand, the Argentine, and the U.S.A., sugar from Cuba, tea from India and Ceylon, cheese from Canada, butter from Australia, and oil-bearing seeds from Africa. Large stocks of these had arrived in the country and were in possession of the Ministry, but some had been held up owing to the difficulty of obtaining ships to carry them, and others, having been bought in advance, were not yet due for delivery. To have disposed of these stocks to the trade would have involved the country in financial losses that it is impossible to estimate, while it is very doubtful whether the consumer would have benefited from the transaction.

Moreover, the signing of peace and the raising of the blockade of the Central Powers was bound to bring new competitors into the market. Germany and Austria-Hungary had wasted their man-power in the war, they had been cut off from those chemical manures which were necessary for the proper feeding and tillage of the land, and as a consequence many thousands of acres had gone out of cultivation. To such an extent had this taken place that, if we may believe the reports that were received, Austria-Hungary, which had been accustomed to export sugar to this country, was actually unable to meet the needs of her own population. Further, flocks and herds had been

depleted, oils and fats were scarcely to be had, and the people of both countries were underfed. Much the same conditions prevailed in Russia, so that it was open to question whether that country, which was regarded as the "granary of Europe," had more than enough wheat for its own requirements. When the barrier that had been imposed by the British fleet was withdrawn these countries would hasten to replenish their larders, and in order to meet such circumstances there was no option but to continue for some time the system of co-operative buying on behalf of the Allies, which carried in its train control of prices and distribution.

Another factor in the situation was the fear of a general strike. The Armistice had no effect upon prices, which continued to rise steadily. On the other hand, the process of demobilization, which soon commenced, threw large and ever larger bodies of men upon the labour market, so that wages no longer kept pace with prices and the numbers of unemployed commenced to increase. The general fever of unrest which was one of the results of the war and was seen in its more virulent form in Russia affected the people of this country as well. Labour was restive, "direct action" to carry out political projects which had been rejected by the electorate or never submitted to them was openly urged by some trade union leaders, and a Triple Alliance had been entered into by and between the miners, the railway men and the transport workers to enforce each other's demands by a strike of the three unions. It was evident that were effect to be given to this agreement at any time transport would cease, food could not be distributed, and the community would be in danger of starvation. The Government was compelled to take this into consideration, and the organization of the Ministry of Food was retained

longer than it otherwise would have been, in order to cope with such an emergency if and when it arose.

Though it did not require very great prophetic gifts to foretell the ultimate death of the Ministry, for some considerable time it was as active as ever, and it was only by degrees that the process of decay took place. Minor restrictions were removed, the grip of the Ministry was gradually relaxed, one by one articles of food were released from control, and as members of the divisional staff returned to their pre-war occupations the vacancies they left were seldom filled. The first of the Assistant Commissioners to leave was Mr. Sellers, whose services and those of the Grain Officers were dispensed with when the Cereals (Restriction) Order was revoked. About April 1919, Mr. Bohane, having been appointed Agricultural Superintendent to the Royal Dublin Society, resigned his position of Divisional Commissioner, and Mr. Andrew was appointed in his place, with the writer as Deputy Commissioner. At intervals, Mr. Munro, Captain Caffrey, and Mr. Linaker successively left and their work was distributed amongst those who remained.

In 1920 it was decided to abolish Local Food Control Committees and Executive Officers at the end of June, to group adjoining districts into sixty-six areas, and to place them under the supervision of District Food Officers, who were to be appointed by and held responsible to the Divisional Food Commissioner. On July 4th, a few days after this had been accomplished, meat, which for some time past had only been partially controlled, became entirely free, and the Live Stock Commissioners and their staffs were disbanded. At the end of the year a still more drastic cut was made. The Deputy Commissioner, the

District Food Officers, the Distribution Officers, and half the Inspectors were dismissed, and the work that still remained to be done was carried on at Divisional Headquarters with the help of three Inspectors and two Transport Officers. The Transport Officers acted as assistants to Major J. B. W. Phelps, who had succeeded Captain Page as Assistant Commissioner for Transport and was in charge of the transport side of the emergency arrangements which were to be put in operation in case a strike occurred. The Inspectors were retained rather for the purpose of conducting the inquiries that had to be made than for enforcement, for the diminution in the numbers of the staff had been preceded by a wholesale reduction of the Food Controller's Orders. Sugar, which was the first of the important foodstuffs to be rationed, was also the last to be freed from control. Still, the Sugar Rationing Order, 1920, disappeared in November 1920, and at the end of the following February every Order relating to it was revoked. On March 31st, 1921, the Ministry itself came to an end, and the skeleton organization that was left was taken over by the Board of Trade.

The Orders that remained in force at that date were less than a score in number. Possibly by some oversight, the Fish Distribution Orders were still in existence, though the distribution of fish had ceased to be controlled for some considerable time. The requirement that retailers of food should be registered, which was such a prominent feature of the scheme of national rationing, had been retained in the case of milk retailers and butchers, in order that they might be prevented from commencing new businesses in premises which the local sanitary authority considered to be unsuitable or unsatisfactory from a public health point of view. The Slaughter-houses (Licensing) Order, 1920, which

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had also escaped destruction, made it necessary for keepers of slaughter-houses to obtain licences and had a similar purpose, though its main object was to compel slaughter-house keepers to furnish four-weekly returns of the numbers of cattle, calves, sheep, lambs, goats, and swine slaughtered by them. Again, there was the Waste of Foodstuffs Order, 1918, which no longer inspired shiftless and uneconomical housewives with the terror it did when first issued, though it was capable of being invoked if circumstances warranted it. On October 19th, 1921, the operation of the Slaughter-houses (Licensing) Order was suspended, with the exception of the direction that returns of slaughterings should be made, while the other Orders mentioned above were revoked.* As the Fish Distribution Orders were already defunct, the sentence of death thus passed upon them merely recorded an existing fact and gave rise to no feeling of any sort. The others, however, served a useful purpose, so that it is a little difficult to see why they should have been abolished.

[Before this, namely, on September 1st, 1921, all the Orders relating to beer and spirits had been revoked, together with the Misdescription of Maximum Prices Order, 1919, which had made it an offence for traders to use the words "controlled price" instead of "maximum price," and thereby suggest to the public that what was simply an upward limit was a fixed price.

Earlier still, six other Orders had been revoked. Three of them were "labelling" Orders, namely, the Imported Meat (Labelling) Order (No. 2), 1919, which forbade anyone to expose for sale by retail any imported meat unless it was labelled as such ; the

* While this has been going through the press the Slaughter-houses (Licensing) Order has also been revoked.

Bacon, Ham, and Lard (Sales) Order, 1921, which imposed a similar condition on retail sales of bacon, ham, and lard ; and the Eggs (Description on Sale) Order, 1920, which prohibited the sale of imported eggs under any description of which the words " fresh " or " new laid " formed part unless the word " imported " or the name of the country of origin also formed part of the description. Another was the Jam (Sales) Order, 1920, which also contained provisions as to labelling as well as to sales by nett weight, though its chief purpose was to set up a standard of quality with which all jam offered for sale had to comply. There was also the Bread Order, 1918, which provided that bread should be sold by weight and loaves weigh 1lb. or an even number of pounds ; and, lastly, the Tea (Nett Weights) Order, 1917, the object of which is sufficiently explained by its title. But though these six Orders were revoked, the provisions contained in them were collected, codified, and re-issued by the Board of Trade under the title of the Sale of Food Order, 1921.*

Sale of Food Order, 1921

Out of the hundreds of Orders issued by the Food Controller, the provisions contained in this Order alone remain as a memorial to the Ministry of Food. Both the friends and the enemies of the Ministry will probably agree that, regarded as a memorial, it is somewhat inadequate.

Some day, perhaps, a philosopher or historian will arise capable of appraising impartially the value of the Ministry's work and the effect and influence that rationing had upon the habits and character of the people of these islands. At present, I am afraid that

* An amending Order was issued on the 14th December, 1921.

we are too close to the events which called the Ministry into being to be able to do so. My own disqualifications for the task I admit. As a former servant of the Ministry, I confess that I should be disposed to minimise its faults and to exaggerate the value of its accomplishments; and, while remembering that it allayed discontent amongst the working population by acquiring stocks of food and distributing them upon an equitable basis, to forget the errors that it made and to gloss over the blunders that it perpetrated in the process.



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